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ABSTRACT

This report presents results from an extensive survey done by the CCCC Committee on Assessment to describe the current writing assessment practices at postsecondary institutions of higher education in the United States. The survey gathered information from 534 respondents (representing a 63% response rate; 842 questionnaires were mailed) regarding the kinds of decisions which may be based, in whole or in part, on results of an assessment of writing; the methods employed to assess writing; the roles of participants in the assessment process; the consequences for students; the distribution of authority over the assessment process; and opinions of respondents about the impact of assessment on writing instruction and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the methods employed at their campuses. Demographic information about respondents was also collected. Results are presented in 5 sections: (1) Overall Results; (2) Results for Institutions of Different Sizes; (3) Results for Institutions Categorized by Public/Private Status; (4) Results for Institutions Categorized According to Their Status as 2 Year or 4 Year Institutions; and (5) Respondents' Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to Selected Survey Questions. Contains 63 tables and 30 references. Thirty-two graphs of data are appended. (SR)

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ED 387 793

SURVEY
OF
POSTSECONDARY WRITING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

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with

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INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the CCCC Committee on Assessment was charged with the responsibility of inquiring into the state of postsecondary writing assessment in the United States. The charge to the Committee followed a period of rapid change in the teaching of writing and a growing concern held by many in the field that our assessment methods were not keeping pace with that change. In recent decades, research and practice in writing have led to a view of writing as a meaning-making activity requiring the orchestration of diverse skills and strategies in the completion of tasks that vary with purpose, audience and context (Langer & Applebee, 1987; Odell, 1981; Camp, 1993; Hairston, 1982; White, 1985). Simultaneously, there has been a growing recognition of the inadequacies of many of our traditional methods for assessing writing and a growing dissatisfaction with the gap between assessment practices and teachers' views of effective pedagogy. Critics point to the mismatch between multiple-choice methods and theoretical conceptions of writing as a complex, multi-faceted cognitive activity. They warn of the potentially invidious influence of such tests on curriculum, pointing out that such tests encourage fragmentation of the curriculum (Haertel & Calfee, 1983), that they focus on the less significant components of writing (spelling, usage, punctuation) (Brown, 1978; Greenberg, 1992) and that they emphasize passive choice as opposed to active construction (Johnston, 1985).

Multiple-choice assessment has not been the only target for criticism. While there may be a growing consensus in the field that the "best way to assess students' writing skills is through writing or "direct" assessment," (Greenberg, 1992) critics point to the inadequacies of single-sample testing, expressing their skepticism about the idea that a single sample can adequately represent the variety of discourse modes, purposes and audiences which writing entails (Emig, 1982; Lucas, 1988), and their concern that single-topic, one domain testing may encourage a blurring of distinctions in instruction among text features that are appropriate for different kinds of writing tasks. So widespread is the concern about single sample testing that in November, 1992, the National Council of Teachers of English passed a Sense of the House Motion (No. 3) expressing opposition to single sample testing: "Be it resolved that the Council oppose the practice of claiming to measure a student's overall ability at writing by means of a single score on a single piece of writing produced at one sitting, and be it further resolved that the Council work to eliminate this practice."

Concern is also growing about the potentially negative impact of assessment on faculty and students (Beard, et al., 1985). Critics point to the improper uses to which tests may be put and to the potentially negative impact on students of assessment results based on erroneous judgments based on inadequate measures. Critics also express concern about the potentially negative impact of assessment on faculty, in particular, the loss of authority and professional prerogative that occurs when assessment is mandated by external authorities (Madaus, 1985; Lucas, 1988; Pearson & Valencia, 1987; Murphy & Grant, in press) and they call for the involvement of faculty in the assessment process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Greenberg, for example, points out the role which faculty play in establishing validity: "Faculty who share ideas and work together to develop an essay test often shape an exam that is grounded in their theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (1992, 15).

In higher education, writing assessment has come to play an increasingly important role as a source of information for making decisions about the admission of students, their placement into particular courses, and their proficiency. Reflecting widespread professional concern over the potentially negative effects of testing programs on curriculum, faculty, and students, the CCCC and its parent organization the NCTE have drafted a number of resolutions about assessment practices during the last two decades. Beginning in 1971, the NCTE passed a resolution urging school districts, colleges and state agencies to re-examine standardized tests "in order to determine the appropriateness of their content to actual instructional goals" and to "consider carefully means other than standardized tests, including student self-evaluation, of assessing the language arts skills of students." Subsequent resolutions urged faculty and administrators to develop alternatives to standardized testing (1976), to avoid tests that focused on subskills (1977), and to reject mandated assessments as criteria for promotion and/or graduation of students (1977). In reaction to continued concern that "multiple-choice and short answer tests yield little diagnostic information of use to teachers and continue to disrupt the curriculum and distract teachers from working to develop students' higher order thinking skills," a 1985 NCTE resolution called for the Council to seek ways to "empower English teachers," and "to seek to develop new and alternative models of testing and assessment." In 1978, CCCC passed a Resolution on Testing that recommended guidelines for conducting postsecondary writing assessments. These guidelines, addressing the question of authority over the assessment process, recommended that "Responsibility for giving credit, exemption, or accreditation" should rest, "not with local administrators or state officials, but with the composition faculty in each institution," and further, that tests of writing be "administered under the primary control and supervision of representatives of the composition faculty." More recently, the NCTE passed the previously mentioned Sense of the House Motion opposing single score, single sample, single sitting testing (1991).

In addition to taking positions on assessment issues, both CCCC and NCTE have established committees to advise their memberships about assessment issues. In 1980, the NCTE established its Committee on Testing and Evaluation, which in 1985 was made a Standing Committee. In 1991 NCTE and IRA joined forces to establish the joint NCTE/IRA Task Force on Literacy Assessment. In 1978, the CCCC established the Committee on Assessment (then called the Committee on Testing). One role played by these committees has been to gather information about assessment practices. In the case of CCCC committees, the focus has been on assessment practices at postsecondary institutions. In 1979 and again in 1981 (Purnell, 1982), the CCCC Task Force on Testing conducted a survey on proficiency testing. While members of the Task Force acknowledged the "potential benefits for our profession" of testing, they also warned that "it surely can present grave threats to the equity and integrity of the educational process" and they recommended "a continuing study of both the products and process of testing, its uses and abuses." In 1985, the CCCC Committee on Assessment conducted a survey of writing assessment practices at postsecondary institutions and prepared a report for the

CCCC Executive Committee. In 1992, as noted above, the CCCC Committee on Assessment was again authorized to conduct a survey to describe the current writing assessment practices at postsecondary institutions of higher education in the United States.

THE SURVEY

Members of the Committee designed and piloted a thirty-item questionnaire to collect information about many of the areas of concern described above. Specifically, the survey asked questions about the following practices in writing assessment in postsecondary institutions: 1) the kinds of decisions which may be based, in whole or in part, on results of an assessment of writing, 2) the methods employed to assess writing, 3) the roles of participants in the assessment process, 4) the consequences for students, 5) the distribution of authority over the assessment process, and 6) opinions of respondents about the impact of assessment on writing instruction and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the methods employed at their campuses. Demographic information about respondents was also collected.

Based on the demographic information provided by the U. S. Department of Education, a stratified random sample was drawn from the total population of 3,504 institutions of higher education which represented public and private institutions, and institutions by size of enrollments (small, medium, large, very large). With financial support provided by the NCTE, a total of 842 surveys were mailed to the institutions sampled. Letters accompanying the surveys were addressed either to the directors of writing programs at each institution or to the chairs of English departments. A second mailing 5 weeks following the first was sent to institutions that had not responded. Follow up calls were made to 40 of the smaller colleges to obtain a more representative sample of them.

A total of 534 completed surveys were returned, representing 15 percent of the population and a 63 percent response rate. As a whole, the sample is substantially larger than the minimum 10 percent required for descriptive research and allows generalization to the population (Gay, 1987, 114-115). For a sample of 500, Lauer and Asher (1988) indicate 95% confidence interval limits of plus and minus 4.4%, (p.58). With a correction factor of .92 for a 15% sample, (p.61) the confidence limits for this sample narrow to plus and minus 4.05%. Moreover, the relatively high rate of return suggests that in general, the sample is unbiased. Analysis of the responses indicated that campuses responded in relatively close proportion to the strata on which the sample was based (size and public/private status) (see Table 1).

Table 1
Rate of Return by Type of Institution by Institution Size

	Public	%	Private	%
Small	19/153	(.12)	97/1174	(.08)
Medium	126/712	(.18)	130/666	(.20)
Large	108/571	(.19)	27/113	(.24)
Ex-Large	27/132	(.20)	0/9	(.0)

In only two cases did subsamples fall below 10% of the population on which they were based. The subsample for small, private institutions (97) is only 8% of the population of small, private institutions in the United States (1174). In addition, the sample as a whole does not include responses from any of the 9 extra-large, private institutions in the United States. However, each of the other subsamples is more than 10% of the population on which it is based.

The survey data were entered on a mainframe computer, checked for reliability, and summarized in terms of frequencies of responses to the different questions and other analyses, such as cross-tabulations, by Optimum Data Systems. Additional cross-tabulations were completed by an employee of the CRESS Center at U.C. Davis. These data were then analyzed and interpreted by the co-chair and a former member of the Committee on Assessment.

The results of this survey were analyzed from three perspectives—responses provided by (a) all respondents regardless of category of institution or size, (b) respondents categorized as representing either public or private institutions, and (c) respondents categorized by size of institutions (enrollments). The latter analyses were undertaken to determine the extent to which practices differed, depending on the kinds of support received or the numbers of students for which decisions were being made. While the results for all respondents are presented in detail here, due to space limitations, only selected results of the other analyses are mentioned. A more complete report of the survey results will be submitted to the Executive Committee and will be made available on ERIC. The following discussions begin with the demographics for, and results supplied by, all respondents.

Demographics of the Survey Respondents

The individuals who responded to the survey consisted of 166 faculty members, 95 writing program administrators, 216 department chairpersons, 31 deans, and six non-instructional staff. According to responses to a question about the nature of the institutions, the campuses they represented were 174 two-year, 129 four-year, 208 four-year with advanced degree programs, and 5 graduate institutions (18 of the institutions failed to respond to the question asking them to classify their campus). Based on information supplied by the U.S. Department of Education, 245 of the institutions were classified as private and 264 were public. The institutions were further classified on the basis of their enrollments as Extra Large (20,000+), Large (5,000-19,999), Medium (1,000 - 4,999) and Small (1-999). Of the institutions which responded, 27 were Extra Large, 135 were Large, 256 were Medium, and 116 were Small.

SECTION I: OVERALL RESULTS

Assessment Methods and Decisions Based on Assessment Results

To gather information about the extent to which writing assessment plays a role in critical decision-making processes in postsecondary institutions, questions in the first section of the survey asked whether or not the following critical decisions about students were based on any type of assessment of writing skills:

(a) *admission to campus*, e.g. essay questions on the campus's application form, SAT scores, etc.,
(b) *exemption from regular freshman English*, e.g. AP tests, CLEP tests, campus developed exams, etc.,
(c) *placement in freshman English or writing courses*, e.g. exams for students new to the writing curriculum,
(d) *proficiency for entry into a next level of coursework*, e.g. for students moving from the highest level basic writing course to the first semester of regular freshman English, or for students moving from freshman-sophomore standing to junior-senior standing, and
(e) *condition of graduation* (exit) e.g., proficiency which must be demonstrated prior to graduation.

For the sake of brevity, the terminology describing the decisions based on assessment results, or purposes for using writing assessment, have been shortened in the text to "admission" for admission to campus, "exemption" for exemption from regular freshman English, "placement" for placement in freshman English or writing courses, "proficiency" for proficiency for entry into a next level of coursework, and "graduation" for condition of graduation.

Which Decisions are Based on the Assessment of Writing Skills?

Of the 534 respondents, the numbers and percentages of those who indicated whether or not they based certain decisions, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills were as follows:

Table 2
Decisions Based on Any Type of Assessment of Writing Skills
(N=534)

	Yes		No		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	232	43	269	50	33	6
Exemption	381	71	116	22	37	7
Placement	421	79	82	15	31	6
Proficiency	304	57	186	35	44	8
Graduation	172	32	320	60	42	8

For those who indicated that decisions on their campuses are based, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills, a majority of the total number of respondents use some form of writing assessment for placement (421, 79%) and exemption (381, 71%) decisions. A considerable number (304, 57%) also use writing assessment to make decisions regarding exemption. Of interest is the large number of institutions that use writing assessment as a condition of graduation (172, 32%). However, it should be noted that because the question asked about "any" type of assessment of writing, the term "assessment" could be interpreted broadly to mean writing requirements which are integrated into required courses set by the institution as conditions for graduation (as well as more formal assessments) as forms of writing assessment. The results indicate that, overall, most of the decision-making based on writing assessment revolves around the freshman English course.

What Methods are Used for the Different Assessment Purposes?

Question 1 of the survey asked about any type of writing assessment, including untimed writing samples such as the essays which are submitted with applications for admission. Question 2, on the other hand, excluded untimed writing samples, focusing instead on three particular assessment methods: Multiple-choice exams, timed writing samples, and portfolios. Responses to the two questions thus differed substantially. In addition, however, several respondents who had indicated that they used writing assessment for certain purposes in question 1 did not respond to question 2. Some respondents may have found this question complex and thus difficult to answer. An additional cross-check of respondents' answers revealed that a few individuals who did not respond to question 2 later answered specific questions about a particular method. The results in this section, then, must be interpreted cautiously.

Table 3
Approximate Numbers of Institutions Using Multiple Choice, Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making

	Use Writing Assessment	Multiple Choice Exams		Timed Writing Samples		Portfolios	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	232	196	84	102	44	32	14
Exemption	381	259	68	271	71	46	12
Placement	421	316	75	323	77	22	5
Proficiency	304	129	42	241	79	110	36
Graduation	172	78	45	126	73	45	26

[Percentages are based on the total number of institutions reporting that they use writing assessment for each particular decision making purpose. The numbers reported for each assessment method include all institutions which report using the method, whether alone or in combination with another assessment method.]

Approximate numbers of institutions using multiple choice exams, timed writing samples and/or portfolios alone, or in combination with another method are reported in Table 3. The estimates for multiple choice and timed writing samples are based on the numbers of institutions who responded to specific questions regarding the development and implementation of those particular assessment methods. The estimates for portfolios are based upon the number of institutions reporting their use for each of the purposes in response to question 2. Because respondents at a number of the institutions which use writing assessment for particular decisions failed to respond to question 2, the numbers reported for portfolios may be an underestimate of their actual use.

Responses indicate that of the institutions using writing assessment to make decisions about admission, approximately 84% use multiple choice exams, approximately 44% use timed writing samples, and approximately 14% use portfolios. For making decisions about exemption, approximately 68% use multiple choice, while 71% use timed writing samples, and 12% use portfolios. For making decisions about placement, approximately 75% use multiple-choice, 77% timed writing samples, and 5%, portfolios. For making decisions about proficiency, approximately 42% use multiple-choice exams, 79%, timed writing samples and 36% portfolios. For making decisions about graduation, approximately 78% use multiple-choice exams, 73% timed writing samples, and 26% portfolios.

Practices Associated with Timed Writing Samples

Several of the survey questions focused on the assessment process, asking who develops, scores, and/or makes decisions about the results of particular exams, how particular exams are implemented and scored, and what kinds of feedback students receive. In an effort to create as brief a survey as possible, questions in this section of the survey dealt only with multiple-choice and timed writing assessments. Specific questions about the development and implementation of portfolio assessment were not posed because at the time the survey was developed, it was expected that few institutions were using this method to assess writing.

How Many Samples are Collected in Timed Writing Assessments?

In response to concern in the profession about the extent to which procedures for conducting writing samples relate to current theoretical conceptions of writing a complex, multi-faceted cognitive activity and the extent to which assessment methods reflect teachers' views of effective pedagogy, the Committee included several questions in the survey about specific assessment practices. In the case of assessments in which timed writing samples were collected, these included questions about the number of samples collected, the time allowed for writing, whether prewriting and revising activities were encouraged, and whether students received feedback about their performance. Of particular interest to the Committee was the extent to which institutions using writing assessment in decision-making relied on single sample testing.

Table 4
Numbers of Writing Samples Collected

	One Sample		Two Samples		Three Samples		Four or more Samples	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	45	82	5	9	0	0	5	9
Exemption	153	79	21	11	9	5	10	5
Placement	205	85	21	9	6	2	10	4
Proficiency	103	65	20	13	9	6	26	16
Graduation	66	83	6	8	3	4	5	6

[Percentages based on the number of institutions responding to each question]

Of the institutions indicating that timed writing samples are collected to make decisions about admission, (45, 82%) rely on a single sample, about exemption, (153, 79%), about placement, (205, 85%), about proficiency, (103, 65%), and about graduation, (66, 83%). Thus, in spite of professional concern about the practice of making generalizations about overall writing ability from a single sample collected on a single occasion, this seems to be the most common practice in the direct assessment of writing in which timed writing samples are collected.

How Much Time Is Allowed for Writing in Timed Writing Assessments?

The amount of time students are allowed to complete writing samples is an issue of concern to professionals who want to see a closer match between assessment procedures and teachers' views of effective pedagogy. Assessments which allow brief amounts of time tap only first draft writing while effective pedagogy encourages students to plan and revise their writing. Further, there is some evidence that linguistic minority students are particularly disadvantaged by abbreviated time frames (Hilgers, 1992). To gather information about this issue, the survey asked respondents who used timed writing samples to make assessment decisions to indicate the amount of time allowed. The results are presented in Table 5.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about admission, (22, 35%) allow 30 minutes or less, (27, 43%) allow 31 to 60 minutes, (8, 13%) allow 61 to 90 minutes, while (6, 9%) allow more than 90 minutes. Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about exemption, (31, 14%) allow 30 minutes or less, (101, 45%) allow 31 to 60 minutes, (45, 20%) allow 61 to 90 minutes, while (48, 21%) allow more than 90 minutes. Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about placement, (61, 19%) allow 30 minutes or less, (101, 56%) allow 31 to 60 minutes, (44, 14%) allow 61 to 90 minutes, while (33, 11%) allow more than 90 minutes. Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about proficiency, (18,18%) allow 30 minutes or less, (93, 42%) allow 31 to 60 minutes, (45, 20%) allow 61 to 90 minutes, while (66, 30%) allow more than 90 minutes.

Table 5
Average Times Allowed To Complete a Writing Sample

	<30		31-60		61-90		90+	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	22	35	27	43	8	13	6	10
Exemption	31	14	101	45	45	20	48	21
Placement	61	19	175	56	44	14	33	11
Proficiency	18	8	93	42	45	20	66	30
Graduation	6	6	43	40	18	17	40	37

Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about graduation, (6, 6%) allow 30 minutes or less, (43, 40%) allow 31 to 60 minutes, (18, 17%) allow 61 to 90 minutes, while (40, 37%) allow more than 90 minutes. Thus, almost regardless of purpose, most institutions allow students an hour or less to complete a writing sample: 78% for admission, 59% for exemption, and 75% for placement. Half of the institutions using timed writing samples (50%) allow an hour or less for proficiency exams, while slightly fewer (46%) allow an hour or less for writing samples collected to make decisions about graduation. Relatively more time seems to be allowed in assessments related to proficiency and graduation than in assessments related to admission, exemption and placement.

Are Prewriting and/or Revising Activities Encouraged When Timed Writing Samples Are Collected?

In order to gather information about the degree to which assessment procedures mirrored typical patterns in writing instruction, respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities during timed writing tasks. Most institutions reported they did not encourage prewriting and/or revising activities during assessments conducted for purposes of admission (65, 77%). For exemption and placement, however, the numbers of institutions are divided nearly equally among those who indicate they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities (see Table 6). However, for proficiency and for graduation, the pattern seen for admission is reversed. Most respondents indicate they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities when timed writing tasks are used to assess proficiency for entry into the next level of coursework (173, 71%) or as a condition of graduation (79, 64%). It appears that many institutions acknowledge the value of these activities beyond the freshman level of education. Given the relatively limited amount of time allowed for writing in many of these assessments, however, there is some question as to the extent such activities may realistically be possible.

Table 6
Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples

	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
Admission	19	23	65	77
Exemption	107	45	133	55
Placement	169	52	154	48
Proficiency	173	71	70	29
Graduation	79	64	45	36

What Methods are Used to Score Timed Writing Samples?

The kinds of scoring methods used at the different institutions for the various purposes were also reported by the respondents. For purposes of uniformity in the use of terminology, analytic scoring was defined as scoring of general features of writing such as ideas, organization, usage, punctuation, etc. General impression scoring was defined as holistic scoring of the essay as a whole, while primary trait scoring was defined as scoring of the rhetorical features of a piece of writing which are relevant to the kind of discourse it is, e.g. narrative, memoir, argument, etc. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Of those institutions which indicate that they use timed writing samples in making a decision, a single scoring method—general impression scoring—appears to be predominant for all purposes: (46, 57%) for admission, (118, 47%) for exemption, (176, 54%) for placement, (111, 46%) for proficiency, and (61, 50%) for graduation. Several institutions, however, report using analytic scoring, (19,23%) for admission, (57, 23%), for exemption (52, 16%) for placement (49, 21%) for proficiency and (19, 16%) for graduation. Several institutions use both analytic and general impression scoring for the scoring of timed writing samples for admission, exemption, proficiency, and graduation decisions (see Table 7). Primary trait scoring is used by only a few institutions (see Table 7).

Table 7
Scoring Methods for Timed Writing Samples

	Numbers of Institutions Using Single Scoring Methods						Numbers of Institutions Using Combinations of Scoring Methods								
	Analytic		General Impression		Primary Trait		Analytic & General Impression		Analytic & Primary Trait		General Impression & Primary Trait		All Three Methods		Number Responding
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Admission	19	23	46	57	0	0	12	15	0	0	1	1	3	4	81
Exemption	57	23	118	47	3	1	37	15	3	1	3	1	28	11	249
Placement	52	16	176	54	4	1	62	19	5	2	3	1	25	8	327
Proficiency	49	21	111	46	2	1	32	13	8	3	3	1	34	14	239
Graduation	19	16	61	50	2	2	18	15	2	2	3	2	16	13	121

(Percentages based on the number of institutions responding to this question.)

Is Feedback Provided to Students about the Results of Timed Writing Assessments?

An issue in assessment procedures is the question of whether students should receive feedback about their performance. For pragmatic reasons, (expense, time) some institutions may not provide feedback. However, some educators argue that assessment should contribute to learning and that feedback is thus a necessary part of the assessment process. To gather information relevant to this issue, two questions involving timed writing samples asked about opportunities for students to receive feedback about their performance and the kinds of feedback that students receive were included in the survey.

Table 8
Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Samples

Opportunity for Students to Receive Feedback

	Yes, automatic		Yes, if requested		No, no feedback	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	31	32	24	25	42	43
Exemption	78	30	126	48	56	22
Placement	113	34	163	49	60	18
Proficiency	120	49	106	44	17	7
Graduation	44	36	72	59	6	5

At the point of admission, most institutions (56, 57%) provide feedback, (31, 32 %) automatically and (24, 25%) if requested. However, many institutions (42, 43%) do not provide feedback at all. Beyond admission, most institutions provide feedback—most, automatically for proficiency (120, 49%; most, by request for exemption (126, 48%), placement (163, 48%), and graduation (72, 59%). For those institutions who use timed writing samples for condition of graduation, very few (6, 5%) do not provide feedback about performance.

Certain kinds of feedback may be more helpful to students than others. Scores, for example, may allow a student to assess the strength of his or her performance, but they will not provide information about areas of strength or weakness nor how to improve the performance. To explore this issue, information about the kinds of feedback provided was also collected (See Table 9).

Table 9
Kinds of Feedback Provided To Students about Timed Writing Samples

	Students Receive Scores		Students Receive Written Comments		Students Receive Comments in Conference		Scores and Written Comments		Scores and Comments in Conference		Written Comments and Conference		All Three Kinds of Feedback		Number Responding
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Admission	31	51	2	3	14	23	0	0	6	10	2	3	6	10	61
Exemption	53	26	11	5	81	40	9	4	27	13	11	5	13	6	205
Placement	64	23	11	4	117	41	6	2	45	16	18	6	22	8	283
Proficiency	30	14	12	55	72	33	7	3	29	13	25	11	46	21	221
Graduation	19	17	6	5	38	34	5	4	18	16	9	8	18	16	113

Approximately half of the institutions which provide feedback about writing assessment for admission decisions (31, 50%) only provide scores, while half provide written comments, comments in conference, or some combination of the three kinds of feedback. Beyond admission, however, relatively more institutions provide comments in conference (81, 40%) about exemption assessment, (117, 41%) about placement assessment, (72, 33%) about proficiency, and (38, 34%) about assessment as a condition of graduation or some combination of written comments and/or comments in conference in addition to scores.

Participants in the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction, some professionals argue for the value of direct involvement of faculty in the assessment process. They point out that when faculty are involved in development, assessments are more likely to be grounded in the faculty's "theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (Greenberg, 1992, 15). It has also been argued that participation in the assessment process can serve as a vehicle for effective staff development, with the caution that "a good test can have as positive an effect on mediocre teaching as a bad test has negative effects on teaching" (Lucas, 1988, 2). To gather information about the extent of faculty involvement in the writing assessment process in postsecondary institutions, specific questions about faculty involvement were included in the survey.

Who Develops Multiple Choice Exams?

Among the institutions who use multiple choice exams, most exams are developed by the staff of a commercial agency (such as the ACT, SAT, or CLEP) for the assessment of writing at the pre-freshman and freshman levels—for admission (176, 90%), exemption (198, 76%), and placement (223, 71%). This finding is not surprising, since standardized tests are commonly used, particularly for admission and exemption (such as the AP English examination). Evidently many institutions also extend the application of these scores to placement in freshman English or writing courses. Of those using multiple choice exams to assess writing proficiency for entry to the next level of coursework, the multiple choice exams are developed at most institutions (69, 53%) by their own faculty or staff, although many institutions (43, 33%) use commercially prepared exams. When used as a condition for graduation, many (36, 46%) multiple choice exams are developed by faculty of staff at their own college or university, but many (24, 31%) also are developed by a commercial agency, and some (16, 20%), by a state agency or department (Table 10).

Table 10
Participants in the Assessment Process: Multiple Choice Exams

	Who Develops						Who Sets the Standards					
	Staff of a commercial agency		Faculty/ staff at own college or university		Staff at state agency or department		Administrator at own college or university		Faculty/ staff at own college or university		Staff at state agency or department	
	M choice		M choice		M choice		M choice		M choice		M choice	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	176	93	8	4	6	3	108	61	56	32	13	7
Exemption	198	80	39	16	11	4	46	19	175	74	15	6
Placement	223	78	45	16	19	7	35	12	234	82	17	6
Proficiency	43	36	69	57	9	7	9	6	128	91	4	3
Graduation	24	32	36	47	16	21	11	13	62	73	12	14

Who Sets the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams?

The individual who sets the standards (e.g., who decides which scores are acceptable) at institutions using multiple choice writing assessments for the purpose of admission is predominantly the administrator (108, 61%) at the college or university, with a relatively large number of institutions involving their faculty (56, 32%) in this process. As would be expected, faculty are typically not active in the admissions process. For all other purposes, however, the faculty at most institutions set the standards. For exemption decisions, respondents indicated that standards are set primarily by faculty (175, 74%) and some by administrators (46, 19%); for placement, primarily by faculty (234, 82%); for proficiency, primarily by faculty (128, 91%); and for graduation, primarily by faculty (62, 73%) as well as by some administrators (11, 13%) and state agencies (12, 14%) (Table 10).

Table 11
Participants in the Assessment Process: Timed Writing Samples

	Who Develops						Who Sets the Standards					
	Staff of a commercial agency		Faculty/ staff at own college or university		Staff at state agency or department		Administrator at own college or university		Faculty/ staff at own college or university		Staff at state agency or department	
	W samples		W samples		W samples		W samples		W samples		W samples	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	42	43	51	52	5	5	43	44	53	54	2	2
Exemption	73	28	179	69	6	2	20	8	231	89	10	4
Placement	26	8	273	88	12	4	10	3	298	93	12	4
Proficiency	8	3	228	95	3	1	6	2	237	97	2	1
Graduation	9	7	101	81	15	12	9	7	102	80	16	13

Who Develops the Topics for Timed Writing Samples?

In contrast to the results for multiple choice exams, among the institutions that use timed writing samples for their assessment purposes, most of the assessments were developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities. The one exception is for admission—nearly half the respondents (42, 43%) used topics for timed writing samples developed by a commercial agency and half (51, 52%), by faculty or staff. These data suggest, as previously mentioned, that the commonly used standardized tests which include a writing sample provide scores for the assessment of writing skills as well as for the assessment of other indicators of preparation for higher education in the admissions process. Significantly, a sizable proportion of institutions assess writing skills at admission with timed writing exams which are developed by faculty or staff. In contrast, at institutions that use multiple choice writing exams in their admission process the preponderance of exams are prepared by a commercial agency. With regard to exemption, most (179, 70%) respondents indicated that their timed writing exams are developed by faculty or staff, although many (73, 28%) use commercially developed timed writing exams for exemption as well. It is likely that the scores from the latter are derived from the standardized tests that are traditionally used to make admissions decisions. Timed writing exams used for placement, entry, and graduation decisions are predominantly developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities—by 273 (88 %) for placement, 228 (95 %) for proficiency, and 101 (80 %) for graduation (see Table 11).

Who Sets the Standards for the Evaluation of Timed Writing Samples?

Data with regard to the individual who sets the standards at institutions using timed writing exams reflected the same pattern as did responses in the previous question, as well as for the parallel question regarding setting standards for multiple-choice exams. For the admissions process, for nearly half (43, 44%) the institutions, the decision comes from the "top down," or the administration, and slightly more than half (53, 54 %), from the faculty or staff. For the remaining purposes, standards are set predominantly by the faculty or staff—by 231 (88%) for exemption, 298 (93%) for placement, 237 (97%) for proficiency, and 102 (80%) for graduation (see Table 11).

Who Scores the Timed Writing Samples?

The individuals who score the timed writing samples reflect the pattern of practices reported in the data regarding test development and standard setting. For admission, nearly half (42, 45 %) of the scoring is conducted by a commercial agency, as would be expected if they are standardized tests; however, many (37, 40%) are scored by English or composition faculty at their campuses (Table 10). Repeating the pattern observed in the related questions, scoring for exemption purposes is conducted by faculty at considerably more institutions (193, 75%) than by a commercial agency (51, 20%). For the three other purposes, the faculty are predominantly involved in scoring the timed writing samples for placement

(264, 88%), proficiency (232, 97%), and graduation (93, 83%). In addition, only a few respondents reported that they used a combination of two of the three approaches to scoring the timed writing samples—four, for admission; 10, for exemption; 19, for placement; 11, for proficiency; and 14, for graduation.

Table 12
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples

Who Scores Timed Writing Samples?

	Staff of a commercial agency		Eng. or comp. faculty at own campus		Testing staff at own campus	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	42	45	37	40	14	15
Exemption	51	20	193	75	15	6
Placement	19	6	264	88	18	6
Proficiency	2	1	232	97	6	2
Graduation	10	9	93	83	9	8

[Numbers and percentages reported are based on the number of institutions which responded to this particular item. Thus, the numbers reported for *scoring* writing samples may vary somewhat from the numbers reported for other items dealing with timed writing samples. Some respondents may have been unfamiliar with particular details of the assessment process.]

Authority over the Assessment Process

In addition to faculty participation in the assessment process, authority over the process is an issue of concern to educators. External testing programs may influence what is taught and how it is taught (Haertel, 1988). Although college instructors may be less affected by pressure to shape their teaching and curriculum to fit external tests than their counterparts in K-12 schools, to some degree they too may sometimes face the choice of whether or not they should teach to the test. Like their K-12 counterparts, faculty in postsecondary institutions may face the diminution of their professional prerogatives, a loss of voice in determining what should be considered valuable enough to justify expending resources on assessing it. Moreover, externally mandated tests may lead to the inference that the instructor's judgment is not to be trusted (Haertel, 1988). Externally mandated tests are thus problematic because they can lead to loss of confidence in the faculty.

To gather information relevant to these issues, the survey asked respondents to identify the primary governing authority over the assessment process for each purpose. In compliance with the survey directions, most respondents checked only one of the three possible responses. In order to reflect the primary practices, the responses of the few who checked more than one possibility were not counted.

Table 13
Governing Authority Over the Assessment Process

By Whom Mandated?

	State/ Regional Authority		Faculty Member or Group		Dean or Other Administrator		College Trustees or University Regents	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	61	23	46	17	121	49	25	9
Exemption	16	4	261	72	60	17	7	2
Placement	38	9	302	71	48	11	14	3
Proficiency	6	2	267	88	20	7	5	2
Graduation	25	14	109	61	23	13	18	10

The results suggest that for most purposes, members of the faculty have authority over the assessment process. The exception appears to be the assessment of writing for making decisions about admission. Many institutions (121, 49%) report that an administrator mandates admission assessments, and in many cases, admission assessments are mandated by a state or regional authority (61, 23%).

Consequences for Students

In addition to the issues above, the survey also inquired about the consequences for students of decisions based on the assessment of writing skills, regardless of the particular method or combination of methods employed. In part, the interest of the Committee in this aspect of the assessment process stemmed from recent work in the development of assessment theory which anchors the concept of validity in the social context. Some measurement theorists (Messick, 1989) have begun to include consequences—the uses to which tests are put—as an integral feature of validity. In addition, the Committee included questions about consequences of assessment because of their concern that assessments should bene students, not penalize them unnecessarily.

Table 14
Consequences for Students

For Placement

	Required at This Campus		Optional at This Campus		Not an Option at This Campus	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Take/pass Developmental English Course for Credit	152	54	28	10	104	37
Take/pass Developmental English Course Without Credit	221	69	37	12	63	20
Attend Tutoring	95	32	154	52	45	15
Retake Exam Until Pass	72	28	44	17	137	54

[Percentages based on the number of institutions indicating they use writing assessment to make decisions about placement, N = 421]

For Proficiency for Entry into a Next Level

	Required at This Campus		Optional at This Campus		Not an Option at This Campus	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Prepare a Portfolio and Appeal	6	3	58	28	144	69
Take/Pass Designated English Course Without Credit	218	74	34	11	44	15
Retake Exam Unlimited Times Until Pass	51	24	27	13	137	64
Retake Exam Limited # of Times	44	22	22	11	132	67

[Percentages based on number of institutions indicating they use writing assessment to make decisions about proficiency, N=304.]

For Graduation

	Required at This Campus		Optional at This Campus		Not an Option at This Campus	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Prepare a Portfolio and Appeal	4	3	23	19	93	78
Take/Pass Designated English Course Without Credit	70	43	37	23	54	34
Retake Exam Unlimited Times Until Pass	46	33	21	15	73	52
Retake Exam Limited # of Times	20	18	12	11	77	71

[Percentages based on the number of institutions indicating they use writing assessment to make decisions about graduation, N = 172.]

Respondents answered five questions regarding the consequences for students of decisions based on the assessment of writing skills, regardless of the particular method or combination of methods employed. That is, respondents answers referred to the consequences of *any* type of writing assessment, not to assessment conducted through a particular method. Questions in this section of the survey focused on placement, proficiency and graduation, partly, because it was felt that information relevant to these purposes would be of most use to faculty and others who are concerned with policy surrounding these issues within the college or university. In the interest of keeping the survey brief, questions about the consequences of writing assessment for decisions about admission and graduation were not included in the survey.

What are the Consequences of Decisions about Placement

For campuses that assess writing skills for purposes of placement into freshman writing courses, students who fail to qualify for the regular freshman English course are required by most institutions (221, 69%) to take and pass a developmental English or writing course for which they receive no credit toward graduation (Table 14). On the other hand, many institutions (152, 53%) require students who failed the assessment to take a course for which they receive credit toward graduation. However, on many campuses students do not have either option—to take a course for credit (104, 37%) or a course for no credit (63, 20%). Many campuses offer optional opportunities to students who fail to qualify to attend tutoring (154, 52%) and on many campuses, tutoring is required (95, 32%). However, many do not provide students the option to retake the exam until their performance is satisfactory (137, 54%).

What are the Consequences of Decisions about Proficiency?

Of campuses that assess for proficiency, most require students who fail the assessment to determine proficiency for entry into a next level to take a designated writing course (218, 74%). This approach appears to predominate, since many institutions do not even offer the other options. Many campuses do not allow students to prepare a portfolio (144, 69%), to retake the assessment an unlimited number of times until performance is satisfactory (137, 64%) or to retake the assessment a limited number of times (132, 67%) (See Table 14).

What are the Consequences of Assessment for Graduation?

Of campuses that assess writing to make decisions about graduation, most report that they do not provide students who fail the assessment the option of preparing a portfolio and appealing the decision, (93, 78%). Many of these campuses, however, require that students take and pass a designated writing course (70, 43%) or provide this as an option (37, 23%). In order to graduate, some campuses require (46, 33%) or allow (21,15%) students to take the exam an unlimited number of times. Many campuses, however, do not allow students the options of retaking the exam an unlimited number of times (73, 52%) or a limited number of times (77, 71%).

Respondent Opinions

The three final questions on the survey elicited the opinions of respondents with respect to the assessment of writing skills at their institutions on a four-point scale ranging from "Agree Strongly," to "Disagree Strongly." Most respondents agreed (231, 52%) or agreed strongly (123, 23%) that the assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at their campuses. Further, most agreed (280, 52%) or agreed strongly (125, 23%) that writing assessment has had a good influence on writing instruction. Over half were satisfied with the writing assessment methods employed at their institutions; (59, 11%) agreed strongly, (226, 42%) agreed. However, a considerable number of respondents for their institutions either disagreed (159, 30%) or strongly disagreed (44, 8%) with the statement "I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus." Thus, 38 percent of the respondents are unhappy with their present circumstances in the area of writing assessment (See Table 15).

Table 15
Respondent Opinions About the Assessment of Writing Skills
(N=534)

	Agree Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Disagree Strongly		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
The assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at our campus.	123	23	231	43	94	18	27	5	59	11
The assessment of writing skills has had a good influence on writing instruction at our campus.	125	23	280	52	58	11	16	3	55	10
I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus.	59	11	226	42	159	30	44	8	46	9

[Percentages based on total sample. N = 534]

Summary for All Respondents

The following discussion summarizes the predominant results of the survey in terms of the kinds of decisions made for specific purposes as reported by the total sample. Overall, 21 percent of the 534 responding institutions do not use writing assessment at all for the five different purposes surveyed -- admission, exemption, placement, proficiency, and graduation. The major uses of writing assessment were for placement (79% of the sample using writing assessment) and exemption (71%) purposes.

Admission

- Of the sample of institutions using writing assessment, 43% used it for the admissions process.

- Sixty-six percent use multiple choice assessments; 34 percent, timed writing samples.

- Most writing assessments for this purpose are mandated by the dean or another administrator.

°Of the 66 percent using multiple choice,
--the assessments are developed mainly by a commercial agency.
--the standards are set by an administrator.

°Of the 34 percent using timed writing samples,
--topics are usually developed either by faculty or by a commercial agency.
--standards are set mainly by faculty, but by an administrator for many of the assessments.
--many are scored either by a commercial agency or by their own faculty.
--many use either analytic or general impression scoring.
--most do not give feedback to students, although many do so automatically or by request.

°Most institutions do not encourage prewriting and/or revising in their writing assessments for purposes of admission.

°Many institutions allow either 30 minutes or less or 31 to 60 minutes for students to complete the assessments.

Exemption

°Of the sample of institutions using writing assessment, 71 percent used it for the exemption process.

°Forty-nine percent use multiple choice assessments; 51 percent timed writing samples.

°Most writing assessments for this purpose are mandated by a faculty member or group.

°Of the 49 percent using multiple choice,
--the assessments are developed mainly by a commercial agency
--standards set by their own faculty.

°Of the 51 percent using timed writing samples,
--topics are developed mainly by their faculty, many by a commercial agency.
--standards are set mainly by their faculty.
--they are scored mainly by their own faculty, but many are scored by a commercial agency.
--many use either analytic or general impression scoring.
--most give feedback to students, by request.

°Most institutions do not encourage prewriting and/or revising in their writing assessments for decisions about exemption, although many do.

°Many institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes for students to complete the assessments.

Placement

°Of the sample of institutions using writing assessment, 79 percent used it for the placement process.

°Forty-nine percent use multiple choice assessments; 51 percent, timed writing samples.

°Most writing assessments for this purpose are mandated by a faculty member or group.

°Of the 49 percent using multiple choice,
--the assessments are developed mainly by a commercial agency
--standards are set mainly by the faculty.

°Of the 51 percent using timed writing samples,
--topics are developed mainly by their faculty
--standards are set mainly by their faculty
--the writing samples are scored mainly by the faculty.
--mainly, general impression scoring is used, although many use analytic scoring.
--most institutions give feedback to students, by request.
--many institutions encourage prewriting and/or revising in their writing assessments for decisions regarding placement, but many do not.

°Many institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes for students to complete the assessments.

Proficiency

°Of the sample institutions using writing assessment, 57 percent used it to assess proficiency for entry into the next level of coursework.

°Thirty-five percent use multiple choice assessments; 65 percent, timed writing samples.

°Most writing assessments for this purpose are mandated by a faculty member or group.

°Of the 35 percent using multiple choice,
--most of the assessments are developed by the faculty, although many are developed by a commercial agency.
--standards are set mainly by the faculty.

°Of the 65 percent using timed writing samples,
--the topics are developed mainly by the faculty
--standards are set mainly by the faculty.
--the writing is scored mainly by the faculty.

--many institutions use either analytic or general impression scoring.
--most give feedback to students automatically.

°Most institutions encourage prewriting and/or revising in their writing assessments for making decisions regarding proficiency.

°Most institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes for students to complete the writing; many allow 90 or more minutes, and some, 61-90 minutes.

Graduation

°Of the sample of institutions using writing assessment, 32 percent used it as a condition for graduation.

°Thirty-eight percent use multiple choice assessments for this purpose; 62 percent, timed writing samples.

°Most writing assessments for this purpose are mandated by a faculty member or group.

°Of the 38 percent using multiple choice for this purpose,
--most assessments are developed by the faculty, although many are developed by a commercial agency.
--standards are set mainly by the faculty.

°Of the 62 percent using timed writing samples for this purpose,
--topics are developed mainly by the faculty
--standards are set mainly by the faculty.
--the writing samples are scored mainly by the faculty.
--many use either analytic or general impression scoring.
--most give feedback to students by request.

°Many institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes for students to complete the assessments; many allow 90 or more minutes, and some, 61-90 minutes.

SECTION II. RESPONSES BY INSTITUTIONS OF DIFFERENT SIZES

As noted in the introduction to this report, based on data supplied by the United States Department of Education, the random sample drawn for the survey was stratified on the basis of size of the institution. To simplify reporting, the categories supplied by the department were collapsed into four categories: Extra Large (20,000+), Large (5,000-19,999), Medium (1,000 - 4,999), and Small (1-999). Of the institutions which responded, 27 were extra large, 135 were large, 256 were medium and 116 were small. This section of the report provides results of responses to survey questions categorized by the size of the institution.

Assessment Methods and Decisions Based on Assessment Results

Which Decisions are Based on the Assessment of Writing Skills?

Of the 534 respondents, the numbers and percentages of those who indicated whether or not they based certain decisions, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills were as follows (see Table 16):

Table 16
Decisions Based on Any Type of Assessment of Writing Skills by Size of Institution

	Extra Large				Large				Medium				Small			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	13	48	14	52	53	41	76	59	112	46	131	53	54	53	48	47
Exemption	19	73	7	27	110	84	21	16	180	74	64	26	72	75	24	25
Placement	21	81	5	19	116	89	15	11	199	81	46	19	85	84	16	16
Proficiency	13	57	10	43	86	66	45	34	148	62	91	38	57	59	40	41
Graduation	8	32	17	68	40	31	88	69	83	35	156	65	41	41	59	59

Extra Large = 20,000+
Large = 5,000-19,999
Medium = 1,000 - 4,999
Small = 1-999

[Percentages based on the # of institutions in each size category which responded to the question.]

Following a similar pattern to that found for all respondents, for institutions which indicated that decisions on their campuses are based, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills, most use some form of writing assessment for placement and exemption decisions. Seventy-three percent of the extra large institutions, 84% of the large, 74% of the medium, and 75% of the small institutions report using some form of writing assessment for exemption purposes. Similarly, 81% of the extra large institutions, 89% of the large, 72% of the medium, and 84% of the small institutions report using some form of writing assessment for placement purposes. Relatively fewer institutions use some form of writing assessment for the other assessment purposes. A considerable number also use writing assessment to make decisions regarding proficiency (57% of the extra large institutions, 66% of the large, 62% of the medium and 59% of the small). A fairly large number of institutions report using writing assessment as a condition of graduation. Thirty-two percent (8) of the extra large institutions, 31 % (40) of the large, 35% (83) of the medium and in proportion to institutions of other sizes, slightly more 41% (41) of the small institutions use some form of writing assessment as a condition of graduation. The results indicate that, overall, most of the decision-making based on writing assessment revolves around the freshman English course.

What Methods are Used for the Different Assessment Purposes?

As noted in the section for all respondents, the second question focused on three particular assessment methods: multiple-choice exams, timed writing samples, and portfolios. Thus, several respondents who had indicated that they used writing assessment for certain purposes in question 1 did not respond to question 2. In addition, some respondents may have found this question complex and thus difficult to answer. An additional cross-check of respondents answers revealed that a few individuals who did not respond to question 2 later answered specific questions about a particular method. The results in this section, then, must be interpreted cautiously. Approximate numbers of institutions of different sizes using multiple choice exams, timed writing samples and/or portfolios alone, or in combination with another method are reported in Table 17. The estimates for multiple choice and timed writing samples are based on the numbers of institutions who responded to specific questions regarding the development and implementation of those particular assessment methods. The estimates for portfolios are based upon the number of institutions reporting their use for each of the purposes in response to question 2. Because respondents at a number of the institutions which use writing assessment for particular decisions failed to respond to question 2, the numbers reported for portfolios may be an underestimate of their actual use.

Table 17
Approximate Numbers of Institutions Using Multiple Choice Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	33	61	98	88	54	100	11	85
Timed Writing	24	44	43	38	30	57	5	38
Portfolio	18	33	9	8	4	8	1	8

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	49	68	121	67	76	69	13	68
Timed Writing	58	81	122	68	76	69	15	79
Portfolio	7	10	23	13	12	11	4	21

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	64	75	154	77	85	73	13	62
Timed Writing	71	84	153	77	82	71	17	81
Portfolio	6	7	11	6	2	2	3	14

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	26	46	70	47	30	35	3	23
Timed Writing	44	77	118	80	70	81	9	69
Portfolio	25	44	55	37	25	29	5	38

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	20	49	37	45	18	45	3	38
Timed Writing	30	73	56	67	32	80	8	100
Portfolio	12	29	23	28	7	18	3	38

Responses indicate that of the institutions using multiple choice, timed writing samples and/or portfolios to make decisions about admission, approximately 44% of the small institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 65% of the medium, 61% of the large and 65% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 32% of the small institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 29% of the medium, 34% of the large and 29% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 24% of the small institutions use portfolios, compared to only 6% of the medium, 5% of the large and 6% of the extra large institutions.

Of the institutions using one of the three methods to make decisions about exemption, approximately 43% of the small institutions, 45% of the medium, 46% of the large and 38% of the extra large institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 51% of the small institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 46% of the medium, 46% of the large and 47% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 6% of the small institutions use portfolios, compared to 9% of the medium, 7% of the large and 13% of the extra large institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about placement, approximately 45% of the small institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 48% of the medium, 50% of the large and 39% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 50% of the small institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 48% of the medium, 49% of the large and 52% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 4% of the small institutions use portfolios, compared to 3% of the medium, 1% of the large and 9% of the extra large institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about proficiency, approximately 27% of the small institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 29% of the medium, 24% of the large and 18% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 46% of the small institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 49% of the medium, 56% of the large and 53% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 26% of the small institutions use portfolios, compared to 23% of the medium, 20% of the large and 29% of the extra large institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about graduation, approximately 32% of the small institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 32% of the medium, 32% of the large and 21% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 48% of the small institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 48% of the medium, 56% of the large and 57% of the extra large institutions. Approximately 19% of the small institutions use portfolios, compared to 20% of the medium, 12% of the large and 21% of the extra large institutions.

Practices Associated with Timed Writing Samples

As noted in the section for all respondents, several of the survey questions focused on the assessment process, asking who develops, scores, and/or makes decisions about the results of particular exams, how particular exams are implemented and scored, and what kinds of feedback students receive.

How Many Samples are Collected in Timed Writing Assessments?

Table 18
Numbers of Writing Samples Collected by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
One	14	82	19	76	10	91	2	67
Two	2	12	1	4	1	9	1	33
Three	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
Four or More	1	6	4	16	0	0	0	0

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
One	36	84	71	78	37	79	9	75
Two	4	9	9	10	5	11	3	25
Three	1	2	5	5	3	6	0	0
Four or More	2	5	6	7	2	4	0	0

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
One	44	75	103	82	45	69	13	93
Two	6	10	8	6	7	11	0	0
Three	2	3	0	0	3	5	1	7
Four or More	7	12	14	11	10	15	0	0

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
One	17	50	51	56	29	63	6	100
Two	4	12	10	11	6	13	0	0
Three	1	3	7	8	1	2	0	0
Four or More	12	35	23	25	10	22	0	0

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
One	16	84	26	72	19	95	5	100
Two	1	5	4	11	1	5	0	0
Three	1	5	2	6	0	0	0	0
Four or More	1	5	4	11	0	0	0	0

Of the institutions indicating that timed writing samples are collected to make decisions about admission, approximately 82% (14) of the small institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 76% (19) of the medium, 91% (10) of the large, and 67% (2) of the extra large. For decisions about exemption, approximately 84% (36) of the small institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 78% (71) of the medium, 79% (34) of the large, and 75% (9) of the extra large. For decisions about placement, approximately 75% (44) of the small institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 83% (103) of the medium, 69% (45) of the large, and 93% (13) of the extra large. For decisions about proficiency, approximately 50% (17) of the small institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 56% (51) of the medium, 63% (29) of the large, and 100% (6) of the extra large. For decisions about graduation, approximately 84% 16) of the small institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 72% (26) of the medium, 95% (19) of the large, and 100% (5) of the extra large. For most assessment purposes, the patterns of responses appear to be similar, regardless of the size of the institution. In the case of assessment for proficiency, proportionately more of the extra large institutions appear to rely on a single sample. The reader should note, however, that the percentages for extra large institutions are based on a small number of responses since there were few institutions in this size category.

How Much Time Is Allowed for Writing in Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted in the section for all respondents, the amount of time students are allowed to complete writing samples is an issue of concern to professionals who want to see a closer match between assessment procedures and teachers' views of effective pedagogy, in which students are encouraged to plan and revise their writing. Assessments which allow brief amounts of time tap only first draft writing. To gather information about this issue, the survey asked respondents who used timed writing samples to make assessment decisions to indicate the amount of time allowed per sample. The results for institutions of different sizes are presented in Table 19.

Table 19
Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<30	5	31	13	43	3	23	1	25
31-60	6	38	12	40	7	54	2	50
61-90	3	19	3	10	1	8	1	25
90+	2	13	2	7	2	15	0	0

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<30	7	16	16	15	7	12	1	7
31-60	25	56	45	42	23	39	8	57
61-90	7	16	26	24	12	20	0	0
90+	6	13	20	19	17	29	5	36

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<30	16	25	30	20	13	16	2	11
31-60	36	55	79	54	49	60	11	58
61-90	6	9	25	17	11	13	2	11
90+	7	11	13	9	9	11	4	21

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<30	6	15	10	9	2	3	0	0
31-60	18	44	50	45	20	34	5	56
61-90	7	17	22	20	16	28	0	0
90+	10	24	30	27	22	38	4	44

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<30	3	12	3	6	0	0	0	0
31-60	10	38	20	41	12	46	1	17
61-90	3	12	8	16	6	23	1	17
90+	10	38	18	37	8	31	4	67

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *admission*, approximately 31% (5) of the small institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 43% (13) of the medium, 23% (3) of the large, and 25% (1) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 38% (6) of the small institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 40% (12) of the medium, 54% (7) of the large, and 50% (2) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 19% (3) of the small institution allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 10% (3) of the medium, 8% (1) of the large, and 25% (1) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 13% (2) of the small institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 7% (2) of the medium, 15% (2) of the large, and none of the extra large institutions.

Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about *exemption*, approximately 16% (7) of the small institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 15% (16) of the medium, 12% (7) of the large, and 7% (1) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 56% (25) of the small institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 42% (45) of the medium, 39% (23) of the large, and 57% (8) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 16% (7) of the small institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 24% (26) of the medium, 20% (12) of the large, and none of the extra large institutions. Approximately 13% (6) of the small institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 19% (20) of the medium, 29% (17) of the large, and 36% (5) of the extra large institutions.

Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about *placement*, approximately 25% (16) of the small institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 20% (30) of the medium, 16% (13) of the large, and 11% (2) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 55% (36) of the small institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 54% (79) of the medium, 60% (49) of the large, and 58% (11) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 9% (6) of the small institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 17% (25) of the medium, 13% (11) of the large, and 11% (2) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 11% (7) of the small institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 9% (13) of the medium, 11% (9) of the large, and 21% (4) of the extra large institutions.

Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about *proficiency*, approximately 15% (6) of the small institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 9% (10) of the medium, 3% (2) of the large, and none of the extra large institutions. Approximately 44% (18) of the small institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 45% (50) of the medium, 34% (20) of the large, and 56% (5) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 17% (7) of the small institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 20% (22) of the medium, 28% (16) of the large, and none of the extra large institutions. Approximately 24% (10) of the small institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 27% (30) of the medium, 38% (22) of the large, and 44% (4) of the extra large institutions.

Of those using timed writing samples to make decisions about *graduation*, approximately 12% (3) of the small institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 6% (3) of the medium, none of the large, and none of the extra large institutions. Approximately 38% (10) of the small institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 41% (20) of the medium, 46% (12) of the large, and 17% (1) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 12% (3) of the small institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 16% (8) of the medium, 23% (6) of the large, and 17% (1) of the extra large institutions. Approximately 38% (10) of the small institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 37% (18) of the medium, 31% (8) of the large, and 67% (4) of the extra large institutions.

Are Prewriting and/or Revising Activities Encouraged When Timed Writing Samples Are Collected?

In order to gather information about the degree to which assessment procedures mirrored typical patterns in writing instruction, respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities during timed writing tasks.

Table 20
Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	6	26	6	21	4	17	3	75
No	17	74	28	79	19	83	1	25

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	25	45	47	45	26	40	9	64
No	31	55	58	55	39	60	5	36

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	37	51	79	51	41	52	12	71
No	35	49	76	49	38	48	5	29

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	30	67	86	69	48	76	9	82
No	15	33	38	31	15	24	2	18

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	19	66	38	66	17	57	5	71
No	10	34	20	34	13	43	2	29

Overall, the patterns of responses categorized by size of institutions mirror the patterns found for all respondents together. That is, there did not seem to be any important variation from the pattern according to the size of the institution. Of the institutions responding to this question, 26% (6) of the small institutions, 21% (6) of the medium, 17% (4) of the large, and 75% (3) of the extra large institutions indicated that they did encourage prewriting and/or revising activities when timed writing samples were collected for admissions purposes. When timed samples were collected for exemption purposes, 45% (25) of the small institutions, 45% (47) of the medium, 40% (26) of the large, and 64% (9) of the extra large institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When samples were collected for purposes of placement, 51% (37) of the small, 51% (79) of the medium, 52% (41) of the large, and 64% (9) of the extra large institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When samples were collected as a condition of graduation, 66% (19) of the small, 66% (38) of the medium, 57% (17) of the large, and 71% (5) of the extra large institutions indicated they encouraged such activities.

Is Feedback Provided to Students about the Results of Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted above, an issue in assessment procedures is the question of whether students should receive feedback about their performance. For pragmatic reasons, (expense, time) some institutions may not provide feedback. However, some educators argue that assessment should contribute to learning and that feedback is thus a necessary part of the assessment process. To gather information relevant to this issue, one question on the survey asked whether students had to receive feedback about their performance when timed writing samples were collected.

Table 21
Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s) by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	7	28	15	39	5	18	4	67
Yes, if request	9	36	10	26	5	18	0	0
No, no feedback	9	36	13	34	18	64	2	33

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	15	27	35	29	23	33	5	33
Yes, if request	31	56	63	53	26	37	6	40
No, no feedback	9	16	22	18	21	30	4	27

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	21	30	57	35	27	31	8	42
Yes, if request	36	51	79	49	40	47	8	42
No, no feedback	13	19	25	16	19	22	3	16

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	19	44	64	53	33	49	4	33
Yes, if request	19	44	50	42	31	46	6	50
No, no feedback	5	12	6	5	4	6	2	17

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	8	30	26	46	8	27	2	25
Yes, if request	19	70	28	49	21	70	4	50
No, no feedback	0	0	3	5	1	3	2	25

Of the institutions responding to this question, 36% (9) of the small, 34% (13) of the medium, and 33% (2) of the extra large institutions report that they do not provide feedback to students about their performance on timed writing samples during the admissions process. In contrast, 64% of the large institutions indicate that they do not provide such feedback.

In the case of assessments conducted for exemption purposes, 16% (9) of the small institutions, 18% (22) of the medium, 30% (21) of the large and 27% (4) of the extra large institutions report that they do not provide feedback. In the case of assessments conducted for placement purposes, 19% (13) of the small institutions, 16% (25) of the medium, 22% (19) of the large, and 16% (3) of the extra large institutions report that they do not provide feedback.

Participants in the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction, some professionals argue for the value of direct involvement of faculty in the assessment process. They point out that when faculty are involved in development, assessments are more likely to be grounded in the faculty's "theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (Greenberg, 1992, 15). It has also been argued that participation in the assessment process can serve as a vehicle for effective staff development, with the caution that "a good test can have as positive an effect on mediocre teaching as a bad test has negative effects on teaching" (Lucas, 1988, 2). To gather information about the extent of faculty involvement in the writing assessment process in postsecondary institutions, specific questions about faculty involvement were included in the survey.

Who Develops Multiple Choice Exams?

Following the pattern for all respondents, among the institutions who use multiple choice exams, most exams are developed by the staff of a commercial agency (such as the ACT, SAT, or CLEP) for the assessment of writing at the pre-freshman and freshman levels for admission, regardless of the size of the institution. For admission, 88% of the small institutions, 96% of the medium, 90% of the large, and 100% of the extra large institutions which responded to this question employ a commercial agency's exams. As noted previously, this finding is not surprising, since standardized tests are commonly used, particularly for admission and exemption (such as the AP English examination). Evidently many institutions also extend the application of these scores to placement in freshman English or writing courses. Most institutions, regardless of size, report using a commercial exam for these purposes (see table 21). However, following the pattern for all respondents, of those using multiple choice exams to assess writing proficiency for entry to the next level of coursework, the multiple choice exams are developed at most institutions by their own faculty or staff, at small institutions (15, 60%), at medium (35, 53%), at large institutions (17, 63%) and at the extra large institutions, (2, 67%).

Table 22
Participants in the Development of Multiple Choice Exams By Size of Institution

Commercial Agency Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	29	88	90	95	46	90	11	100
Exemption	36	77	95	81	57	78	10	77
Placement	44	72	117	82	53	69	9	69
Proficiency	9	36	28	42	5	19	1	33
Graduation	7	35	11	31	5	28	1	33

Faculty/Staff at Own College or University

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	1	3	4	4	2	4	0	0
Exemption	10	21	19	16	9	12	1	8
Placement	12	20	19	13	12	16	2	15
Proficiency	15	60	35	53	17	63	2	67
Graduation	10	50	20	57	5	28	1	33

State Agency/Dept. Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	3	9	0	0	3	6	0	0
Exemption	1	2	3	3	7	10	0	0
Placement	5	8	6	4	12	16	0	0
Proficiency	1	4	3	5	5	19	0	0
Graduation	3	15	4	11	8	44	1	33

Who Sets the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams?

The individual who sets the standards (e.g., who decides which scores are acceptable) at institutions using multiple choice writing assessments for the purpose of admission is predominantly the administrator at the college or university, at small institutions (15, 52%), at medium, (58, 64%), at large (30, 61%) at extra large (5, 63%). Following the pattern for all respondents, a relatively large number of institutions report involving their faculty, (13, 45%) at small institutions but relatively fewer at medium (27, 30%), large (13, 27%) and extra large institutions (3,38%). As would be expected, faculty are typically not very active in the admissions process, except perhaps, at small colleges. For all other purposes, however, the faculty at most institutions set the standards, regardless of the size of the institution (see Table 23).

Table 23
Participants in Setting the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams by Size of Institution

Commercial Agency Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	15	52	58	64	30	61	5	62
Exemption	8	19	22	19	13	19	3	30
Placement	7	11	18	13	10	13	0	0
Proficiency	2	6	5	7	2	6	0	0
Graduation	3	13	5	12	3	17	0	0

Faculty/Staff at Own College or University

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	13	45	27	30	13	27	3	38
Exemption	34	79	86	75	48	71	7	70
Placement	51	84	114	82	59	78	10	100
Proficiency	29	94	68	91	27	87	4	100
Graduation	17	74	33	79	11	61	1	50

State Agency/Dept. Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	1	3	6	7	6	12	0	0
Exemption	1	2	7	6	7	10	0	0
Placement	3	5	7	5	7	9	0	0
Proficiency	0	0	2	3	2	6	0	0
Graduation	3	13	4	10	4	22	1	50

Who Develops the Topics for Timed Writing Samples?

In contrast to the results for multiple choice exams, among the institutions that use timed writing samples for their assessment purposes, most of the assessments were developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities. The one exception is for admission--nearly half the respondents at medium sized institutions (21, 50%) and large institutions (14, 50%) used topics for timed writing samples developed by a commercial agency (3, 75% at the extra large institutions. At small institutions, in contrast, most (17, 71%) were developed by faculty or staff at their own institution. These data suggest, as previously mentioned, that the commonly used standardized tests which include a writing sample provide scores for the assessment of writing skills as well as for the assessment of other indicators of preparation for higher education in the admissions process at most institutions, but also, that relatively more of the small institutions may include exams developed on their own campuses in the admissions process.

With regard to exemption, most respondents indicated that their timed writing exams are developed by faculty or staff, regardless of the size of the institutions. Timed writing exams used for placement, entry, and graduation decisions are also predominantly developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities, regardless of the institutions size (see Table 23).

Table 24
Participants in the Development of Timed Writing Exams by Size of Institutions

Commercial Agency Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	4	16	21	50	14	50	3	75
Exemption	16	27	29	24	24	35	4	31
Placement	7	10	14	9	5	6	0	0
Proficiency	1	2	7	6	0	0	0	0
Graduation	3	10	4	7	2	6	0	0

Faculty/Staff at Own University

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	17	71	20	48	13	46	1	25
Exemption	41	71	86	72	43	63	9	69
Placement	60	86	131	89	67	87	15	94
Proficiency	42	95	110	94	67	97	9	100
Graduation	25	83	46	82	23	74	7	88

State Agency/Dept. Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	3	13	1	2	1	4	0	0
Exemption	1	2	4	3	1	1	0	0
Placement	3	4	3	2	5	6	1	6
Proficiency	1	2	0	0	2	3	0	0
Graduation	2	7	6	11	6	19	1	12

Who Sets the Standards for the Evaluation of Timed Writing Samples?

Data with regard to the individual who sets the standards at institutions using timed writing exams reflected the same pattern as did responses in the previous question, as well as for the parallel question regarding setting standards for multiple-choice exams. For the admissions process, at many of the institutions, the decision comes from the "top down," or the administration, at small institutions (7, 32%), at medium (19, 44%) at large (14, 50%) and at extra large (3, 60%). Many of the standards, however, are set by faculty or staff, at small institutions, (15,68%) at medium (19,44%) at large (14, 50%) and at extra large (3, 60%). For the remaining purposes, standards are set predominantly by the faculty or staff, regardless of the size of the institution (see Table 24).

Table 25
Participants in Setting the Standards for Timed Writing Exams

Commercial Agency Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	7	32	19	44	14	50	3	60
Exemption	6	11	8	7	5	7	1	6
Placement	5	7	4	3	1	1	0	0
Proficiency	2	4	2	2	2	3	0	0
Graduation	2	7	3	5	3	10	1	11

Faculty/Staff at Own University

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	15	68	24	56	12	43	2	40
Exemption	49	88	108	89	59	82	15	94
Placement	64	89	147	94	70	93	17	100
Proficiency	43	96	119	97	64	96	11	100
Graduation	24	83	49	83	22	73	7	78

State Agency/Dept. Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	0
Exemption	1	1	5	4	4	6	0	0
Placement	3	4	5	3	4	6	0	0
Proficiency	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Graduation	3	10	7	12	5	17	1	11

Who Scores the Timed Writing Samples?

The individuals who score the timed writing samples reflect the pattern of practices reported in the data regarding test development and standard setting. For admission, nearly half (42, 45 %) of the scoring is conducted by a commercial agency at most institutions, as would be expected if they are standardized tests, (21, 54%) at medium sized institutions, (15, 56%)at large, and (3, 60%) at extra large. The exception is the small colleges, where only (3, 14%) of the writing assessments are reported to be scored by a commercial agency, (13, 59%) by faculty and staff at their own university, and (6, 27%) by staff of a state agency or department. For the other purposes, most timed writing samples are scored by faculty or staff at their own institution, regardless of institution size.

Table 26

Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples by Size of Institution

Commercial Agency Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	3	14	21	54	15	56	3	60
Exemption	11	20	22	18	16	23	2	13
Placement	6	9	8	5	5	7	0	0
Proficiency	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Graduation	3	10	4	9	3	11	0	0

Faculty/Staff at Own University

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	13	59	14	36	8	30	2	40
Exemption	41	73	92	77	48	70	12	80
Placement	56	86	129	88	63	86	16	94
Proficiency	42	93	114	97	66	97	10	100
Graduation	23	77	40	85	24	86	6	86

State Agency/Dept. Staff

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Admission	6	27	4	10	4	15	0	0
Exemption	4	7	5	4	5	7	1	7
Placement	3	5	9	6	5	7	1	6
Proficiency	2	4	2	2	2	3	0	0
Graduation	4	13	3	6	1	4	1	14

Authority over the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction to this report, authority over the assessment process is an issue of concern to educators because externally mandated testing programs may usurp faculty authority and diminish their professional prerogatives. To gather information relevant to this issue, the survey asked respondents to identify the primary governing authority over the assessment process for each assessment purpose. Table 27 presents the results categorized by size of institution.

Table 27
Governing Authority Over the Assessment Process by Size of Institution

Admission

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State/Regional Authority	5	10	31	26	23	32	2	18
Faculty	13	27	21	17	8	11	4	36
Dean or other administrator	27	55	61	50	29	40	4	36
Trustees or Regents	4	8	8	7	12	17	1	9

Exemption

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State/Regional Authority	0	0	9	5	6	6	1	6
Faculty	50	75	129	78	68	72	14	82
Dean or other administrator	17	25	25	15	18	19	0	0
Trustees or Regents	0	0	2	1	3	3	2	12

Placement

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State/Regional Authority	4	5	18	9	12	11	4	19
Faculty	58	75	148	77	82	74	14	67
Dean or other administrator	13	17	24	12	9	8	2	10
Trustees or Regents	2	3	3	2	8	7	1	1

Proficiency

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State/Regional Authority	1	2	3	2	2	3	0	0
Faculty	46	84	142	92	68	87	11	100
Dean or other administrator	6	11	8	5	6	8	0	0
Trustees or Regents	2	4	1	1	2	3	0	0

Graduation

	Small		Medium		Large		Extra Large	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State/Regional Authority	5	13	13	16	6	13	1	13
Faculty	24	62	53	65	27	59	5	63
Dean or other administrator	7	18	10	12	6	13	0	0
Trustees or Regents	3	8	6	7	7	15	2	25

Respondents' reports indicate that 10% (5) of writing assessments at small institutions for admission purposes are mandated by external authorities, 26% (31) at medium institutions, 32% (23) at large, and 18% (2) at extra large. Following the pattern for all respondents, faculty appear to have more authority in assessments conducted for other purposes. Most assessments for exemption are mandated by a faculty member or group, 75% (50) at small institutions, 78% (129) at medium, 72% (68) at large, and 82%

(14) at extra large institutions. Most assessments for placement are mandated by a faculty member or group, 75% (58) at small institutions, 77% (48) at medium, 74% (82) at large, and 67% (14) at extra large institutions. Most assessments for proficiency are mandated by a faculty member or group, 84% (46) at small institutions, 92% (142) at medium, 87% (68) at large, and 100% (11) at extra large institutions. Several assessments for graduation, however, are mandated by a state or regional authority, 13% (5) at small institutions, 16% (13) at medium, 13% (6) at large, and 13% (1) at extra large institutions. In addition, several assessments for placement are mandated by a state or regional authority, 5% (4) at small institutions, 9% (18) at medium, 11% (12) at large, and 19% (4) at extra large institutions.

Respondent Opinions

As noted in the introduction, the three final questions on the survey elicited the opinions of respondents with respect to the assessment of writing skills at their institutions on a four-point scale ranging from "Agree Strongly," to "Disagree Strongly." Most respondents agreed or agreed strongly that the assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at their campuses. Further, most agreed or agreed strongly that writing assessment has had a good influence on writing instruction. Over half were satisfied with the writing assessment methods employed at their institutions. However, a considerable number of respondents for their institutions either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus." Thus, many of the respondents are unhappy with their present circumstances in the area of writing assessment (See Table 28).

Table 28
Respondent Opinions about the Assessment of Writing Skills by Size of Institution

	Small				Medium				Large				Extra large			
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Big Impact	77	79	20	21	167	72	64	28	97	78	28	22	16	67	8	33
Good Influence	90	93	7	7	193	82	42	18	103	82	22	18	22	92	2	8
Satisfied	66	68	31	32	135	56	105	44	70	55	57	45	16	67	8	33

SECTION III. RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY PUBLIC/PRIVATE STATUS OF INSTITUTION

As noted in the introduction to this report, based on data supplied by the United States Department of Education, the random sample drawn for the survey was stratified on the basis of the public or private status of the institution . A total of 280 public institutions and 254 private institutions responded to the survey. This section of the report provides results of responses to survey questions categorized by the public/private status of the institution.

Assessment Methods and Decisions Based on Assessment Results

Which Decisions are Based on the Assessment of Writing Skills?

the 534 respondents, the numbers and percentages of those who indicated whether or not they based certain decisions, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills categorized by the public/private status of the institution are as follows:

Table 29
Decisions Based on Any Type of Assessment of Writing Skills
by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	87	33	147	62
No	178	67	92	38

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	200	74	183	80
No	72	26	45	20

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	241	89	183	78
No	30	11	52	22

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	186	70	118	52
No	78	30	111	48

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	33	87	88	38
No	176	67	144	62

Following a similar pattern to that found for all respondents, for institutions which indicated that decisions on their campuses are based, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills, most use some form of writing assessment for placement and exemption decisions. Seventy-four percent of the public institutions, and 80% of the private institutions report using some form of writing assessment for exemption purposes. Similarly, 89% of the public institutions, and 78% of the private institutions report using some form of writing assessment for placement purposes. Relatively fewer institutions use some form of writing assessment for the other assessment purposes. A considerable number, however, use writing assessment to make decisions regarding proficiency (70% of the public and 52% of the private institutions). A fairly large number of institutions report using writing assessment as a condition of graduation, 33% of the public and 38% of the private institutions. The results indicate that, overall, most of the decision-making based on writing assessment revolves around the freshman English course.

What Methods are Used for the Different Assessment Purposes?

As noted in the section for all respondents, results in this section must be interpreted cautiously. Approximate numbers of institutions of public and private status using multiple choice exams, timed writing samples and/or portfolios alone, or in combination with another method are reported in Table 30. The estimates for multiple choice and timed writing samples are based on the numbers of institutions who responded to specific questions regarding the development and implementation of those particular assessment methods. The estimates for portfolios are based upon the number of institutions reporting their use for each of the purposes in response to question 2. Because respondents at a number of the institutions which use writing assessment for particular decisions failed to respond to question 2, the numbers reported for portfolios may be an underestimate of their actual use.

Table 30
Numbers of Assessments Using Multiple Choice Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making Reported by Public or Private Institutions

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	85	98	105	71
Timed Writing	41	47	58	39
Portfolio	4	5	29	20

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	137	69	111	61
Timed Writing	136	68	123	67
Portfolio	26	13	20	11

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	171	71	120	66
Timed Writing	172	71	140	77
Portfolio	8	3	14	8

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	78	42	43	36
Timed Writing	155	83	84	71
Portfolio	66	35	45	38

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	45	52	31	35
Timed Writing	70	80	55	63
Portfolio	26	30	20	23

Responses indicate that of the institutions using multiple choice, timed writing samples and/or portfolios to make decisions about admission, approximately 98% of the public institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 71% of the private institutions. Approximately 47% of the public institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 39% of the private institutions. Approximately 5% of the public institutions use portfolios, compared to 20% of the private institutions.

Of the institutions using one of the three methods to make decisions about exemption, approximately 69% of the public and 61% of the private institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 68% of the public institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 67% of the private. Approximately 13% of the public institutions use portfolios, compared to 11% of the private institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about placement, approximately 71% of the public and 66% of the private institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 71% of the public institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 77% of the private. Approximately 3% of the public institutions use portfolios, compared to 8% of the private institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about proficiency, approximately 42% of the public and 36% of the private institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 83% of the public institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 71% of the private. Approximately 35% of the public institutions use portfolios, compared to 38% of the private institutions.

Of the institutions using one or more of the three methods to make decisions about graduation, approximately 52% of the public and 35% of the private institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 80% of the public institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 63% of the private. Approximately 30% of the public institutions use portfolios, compared to 23% of the private institutions.

Practices Associated with Timed Writing Samples

As noted in the section for all respondents, several of the survey questions focused on the assessment process, asking who develops, scores, and/or makes decisions about the results of particular exams, how particular exams are implemented and scored, and what kinds of feedback students receive. Tables in this section of the report provide data on these questions with responses categorized by the public/private status of the institution.

How Many Samples are Collected in Timed Writing Assessments?

Table 31
Numbers of Writing Samples Collected in Writing Assessments
Reported by Public and Private Institutions

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
One	16	89	30	79
Two	2	11	3	8
Three	0	0	0	0
Four or More	0	0	5	13

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
One	77	78	76	80
Two	13	13	9	9
Three	5	5	4	4
Four or More	4	4	6	6

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
One	104	74	101	81
Two	10	7	14	11
Three	5	4	1	1
Four or More	22	16	9	7

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
One	62	56	41	61
Two	11	10	9	13
Three	7	6	2	3
Four or More	30	27	15	22

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
One	37	82	29	83
Two	2	4	4	11
Three	2	4	1	3
Four or More	4	9	1	3

Of the institutions indicating that timed writing samples are collected to make decisions about admission, approximately 89% (16) of the public and 79% (30) of the private institutions rely on a single sample. For decisions about exemption, approximately 78% (77) of the public institutions which assess writing for this purpose rely on a single sample, compared to 80% (76) of the private. For decisions about placement, approximately 74% (104) of the public institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 81% (101) of the private. For decisions about proficiency, approximately 56% (62) of the public institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 61% (41) of the private. For decisions about graduation, approximately 82% (37) of the public institutions which assess writing for this purpose rely on a single sample, compared to 83% (29) of the private.

How Much Time Is Allowed for Writing in Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted in the section for all respondents, the amount of time students are allowed to complete writing samples is an issue of concern to professionals who want to see a closer match between assessment procedures and teachers' views of effective pedagogy, in which students are encouraged to plan and revise their writing. Assessments which allow brief amounts of time tap only first draft writing. To gather information about this issue, the survey asked respondents who used timed writing samples to make assessment decisions to indicate the amount of time allowed per sample. The results, categorized by the public/private status of the institution are presented in Table 32.

Table 32
Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample Reported by Public and Private Institutions

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
<30	8	32	14	36
31-60	12	48	15	38
61-90	4	16	4	10
90+	1	4	6	15

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
<30	12	10	19	18
31-60	52	43	49	47
61-90	25	20	20	19
90+	33	27	16	15

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
<30	36	20	25	18
31-60	98	55	77	56
61-90	22	12	22	16
90+	23	13	13	9

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
<30	10	7	8	10
31-60	55	39	38	47
61-90	30	21	15	18
90+	46	33	20	25

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
<30	3	5	3	6
31-60	24	40	19	40
61-90	9	15	9	19
90+	24	40	16	34

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *admission*, approximately 32% (8) of the public institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 36% (14) of the private institutions. Approximately 48% (12) of the public institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 38% (15) of the private institutions. Approximately 16% (4) of the public institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 10% (4) of the private. Approximately 4% (1) of the public institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 15% (6) of the private institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *exemption*, approximately 10% (12) of the public institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 18% (19) of the private institutions. Approximately 43% (52) of the public institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 47% (49) of the private institutions. Approximately 20% (25) of the public institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 19% (20) of the private. Approximately 27% (33) of the public institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 15% (16) of the private institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *placement*, approximately 20% (36) of the public institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 18% (25) of the private institutions. Approximately 55% (98) of the public institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 56% (77) of the private institutions. Approximately 12% (22) of the public institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 16% (22) of the private. Approximately 13% (23) of the public institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 9% (13) of the private institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *proficiency*, approximately 7% (10) of the public institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 10% (8) of the private institutions. Approximately 39% (55) of the public institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 47% (38) of the private institutions. Approximately 21% (30) of the public institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 18% (15) of the private. Approximately 33% (46) of the public institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 25% (20) of the private institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *graduation*, approximately 5% (3) of the public institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 6% (3) of the private institutions. Approximately 40% (24) of the public institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 40% (19) of the private institutions. Approximately 15% (9) of the public institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 19% (9) of the private. Approximately 40% (24) of the public institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 34% (16) of the private institutions.

Are Prewriting and/or Revising Activities Encouraged When Timed Writing Samples Are Collected?

In order to gather information about the degree to which assessment procedures mirrored typical patterns in writing instruction, respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities during timed writing tasks. Table 33 presents responses to these questions categorized by the public/private status of the institutions.

Table 33
Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples Reported by Public or Private Institutions

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	13	36	6	12
No	23	64	43	88

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	60	47	47	42
No	69	53	65	58

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	97	54	72	50
No	84	46	71	50

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	117	76	56	62
No	36	24	34	38

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	43	62	36	65
No	26	38	19	35

Overall, the patterns of responses categorized according to the public or private status of the institution mirror the patterns found for all respondents together. That is, in most cases, there does not seem to be any important variation from the pattern according to the public/private status of the institution. The exceptions appear to be admission and proficiency. Of the institutions responding to this question, 36% (13) of the public institutions, but only 12% (6) of the private institutions indicated that they did encourage prewriting and/or revising activities when timed writing samples were collected for admissions purposes. When timed samples were collected for exemption purposes, 47% (60) of the public institutions and 42% (47) of the private institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected for placement purposes, 54% (97) of the public institutions and 50% (72) of the private institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected to assess proficiency, 76% (117) of the public institutions and 62% (56) of the private institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected for graduation purposes, 62% (43) of the public institutions and 65% (36) of the private institutions indicated they encouraged prewriting and revising activities.

Is Feedback Provided to Students about the Results of Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted above, an issue in assessment procedures is the question of whether students should receive feedback about their performance. For pragmatic reasons, (expense, time) some institutions may not provide feedback. However, some educators argue that assessment should contribute to learning and that feedback is thus a necessary part of the assessment process. To gather information relevant to this issue, one question on the survey asked whether students are given feedback about their performance when timed writing samples were collected. Responses to this question are categorized in Table 34 according to the public/private status of the institutions responding.

Table 34
Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s)
Reported by Public and Private Institutions

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	16	38	15	27
Yes, if request	9	21	15	27
No, no feedback	17	40	26	46

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	52	37	26	21
Yes, if request	55	39	72	60
No, no feedback	33	24	23	19

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	78	41	35	24
Yes, if request	81	43	83	56
No, no feedback	30	16	30	20

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	79	51	41	47
Yes, if request	69	44	37	43
No, no feedback	8	5	9	10

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	25	37	19	35
Yes, if request	38	56	34	63
No, no feedback	5	7	1	2

Of the institutions responding to this question, 40% (17) of the public and 46% (26) of the private institutions report that they do not provide feedback to students about their performance on timed writing samples during the admissions process. In the case of assessments conducted for exemption purposes, 24% (33) of the public and 19% (23) of the private institutions report that they do not provide feedback. In the case of assessments conducted for placement purposes, 16% (30) of the public and 20% (30) of the private institutions report that they do not provide feedback.

Participants in the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction, some professionals argue for the value of direct involvement of faculty in the assessment process. They point out that when faculty are involved in development, assessments are more likely to be grounded in the faculty's "theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (Greenberg, 1992, 15). It has also been argued that participation in the assessment process can serve as a vehicle for effective staff development, with the caution that "a good test can have as positive an effect on mediocre teaching as a bad test has negative effects on teaching" (Lucas, 1988, 2). To gather information about the extent of faculty involvement in the writing assessment process in postsecondary institutions, specific questions about faculty participation were included in the survey.

Who Develops Multiple Choice Exams?

Following the pattern for all respondents, among the institutions who use multiple choice exams, most exams are developed by the staff of a commercial agency (such as the ACT, SAT, or CLEP) for the assessment of writing at the pre-freshman and freshman levels for admission, regardless of the size of the institution. For admission, 88% of the public and 96% of the private institutions which responded to this question employ a commercial agency's exams. As noted previously, this finding is not surprising, since standardized tests are commonly used, particularly for admission and exemption (such as the AP English examination). Most institutions, regardless of their public/private status, report using a commercial exam for these purposes (see Table 35). In contrast to the pattern for admission assessments, and following the pattern for all respondents, the multiple choice exams used to assess proficiency are developed at most public institutions 63% (49) by their own faculty or staff, and at many private institutions by their own faculty or staff 47% (20).

Table 35
Participants in the Development of Multiple Choice Exams by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	75	88	101	96
Faculty/Staff at College or University	5	6	3	3
State Agency or Department	5	6	1	1

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	102	74	96	86
Faculty/Staff at College or University	25	18	14	13
State Agency or Department	10	7	1	1

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	126	74	97	81
Faculty/Staff at College or University	26	15	19	16
State Agency or Department	19	11	4	3

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	21	27	22	51
Faculty/Staff at College or University	49	63	20	47
State Agency or Department	8	10	1	2

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	12	27	12	39
Faculty/Staff at College or University	20	44	16	52
State Agency or Department	13	29	3	10

Who Sets the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams?

The individual who sets the standards (e.g., who decides which scores are acceptable) at institutions using multiple choice writing assessments for the purpose of admission is predominantly the administrator at the college or university, at both public (40, 49%) and private (68, 72%) institutions. Following the pattern for all respondents, a relatively large number of institutions report involving their faculty in decisions about admission (31, 38%) at public institutions and at private (25, 26%) institutions. As would be expected, however, faculty are typically not very active in the admissions process. In contrast to the pattern for decisions about admission, for all other purposes, however, the faculty at most institutions set the standards, regardless of the public/private status of the institution (see Table 36).

Table 36
Participants in Setting the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	40	49	68	72
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	31	38	25	26
State Agency or Department	11	13	2	2

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	29	21	17	17
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	95	69	80	81
State Agency or Department	13	9	2	2

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	20	12	15	13
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	130	78	104	87
State Agency or Department	16	10	1	1

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	4	4	5	10
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	81	91	47	90
State Agency or Department	4	4	0	0

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	5	10	6	16
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	32	67	30	81
State Agency or Department	11	23	1	3

Who Develops the Topics for Timed Writing Samples?

In contrast to the results for multiple choice exams, among the institutions that use timed writing samples for their assessment purposes, most of the assessments were developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities. With regard to admission, most respondents indicated that their timed writing exams are developed by faculty or staff, 49% at public institutions and 55% at private, although many are developed by commercial agencies, 46% at public institutions and 40% at private. With regard to exemption, most respondents indicated that their timed writing exams are developed by faculty or staff, regardless of the public/private status of the institutions. Timed writing exams used for placement, proficiency, and graduation decisions are also predominantly developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities regardless of the institution's status (see Table 37).

Table 37
Participants in the Development of Timed Writing Exams by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	19	46	23	40
Faculty/Staff at College or University	20	49	32	55
State Agency or Department	2	5	3	5

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	42	31	31	25
Faculty/Staff at College or University	90	66	90	73
State Agency or Department	4	3	2	2

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	12	7	14	10
Faculty/Staff at College or University	151	88	123	88
State Agency or Department	9	5	3	2

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	5	3	3	4
Faculty/Staff at College or University	147	95	81	96
State Agency or Department	3	2	0	0

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	5	7	4	7
Faculty/Staff at College or University	52	74	49	89
State Agency or Department	13	19	2	4

Who Sets the Standards for the Evaluation Timed Writing Samples?

Data with regard to the individual who sets the standards at institutions using timed writing exams reflected the same pattern as did responses in the previous question, as well as for the parallel question regarding setting standards for multiple-choice exams. For the admissions process, at many of the institutions, the decision comes from the "top down," or the administration, 38% at public institutions and 49% at private institutions. In most cases, however, standards for timed writing samples are set by faculty or staff (60% at public institutions compared to 51% at private institutions for the admissions process). For the remaining purposes, standards are set primarily by the faculty or staff, regardless of the public/private status of the institution, although standards for graduation are set by a state agency or department at fair number of public institutions (15, 21%).

Table 38
Participants in Setting the Standards for Timed Writing Exams by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	15	38	28	49
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	25	60	29	51
State Agency or Department	2	5	0	0

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	11	8	9	8
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	122	85	110	92
State Agency or Department	10	7	0	0

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	4	2	6	4
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	160	92	139	95
State Agency or Department	10	8	2	1

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	3	2	3	3
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	153	97	85	97
State Agency or Department	2	1	0	0

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	5	7	4	7
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	52	72	51	91
State Agency or Department	15	21	1	2

Who Scores the Timed Writing Samples?

The individuals who score the timed writing samples reflect the pattern of practices reported in the data regarding test development and standard setting. For admission, nearly half of the scoring is conducted by a commercial agency at most institutions, as would be expected if they are standardized tests, (48%) at public institutions, and (43%) at private institutions. For the other purposes, most timed writing samples are scored by faculty or staff at their own institution, regardless of public/private status (see Table 39).

Table 39
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	19	48	23	43
Faculty at Own Campus	16	40	21	39
Testing Staff at Own Campus	5	13	10	19

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	30	21	21	18
Faculty at Own Campus	105	73	89	76
Testing Staff at Own Campus	8	6	7	6

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	8	5	11	8
Faculty at Own Campus	146	87	119	88
Testing Staff at Own Campus	13	8	5	4

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	1	1	1	1
Faculty at Own Campus	153	97	80	96
Testing Staff at Own Campus	4	3	2	2

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	5	8	5	10
Faculty at Own Campus	52	85	42	81
Testing Staff at Own Campus	4	7	5	10

Authority over the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction to this report, authority over the assessment process is an issue of concern to educators because externally mandated testing programs may

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usurp faculty authority and diminish their professional prerogatives. To gather information relevant to this issue, the survey asked respondents to identify the primary governing authority over the assessment process for each assessment purpose.

Table 40
Governing Authority Over the Assessment Process by Public/Private Status of Institution

Admission

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	55	44	6	5
Faculty Member or Group	19	15	27	21
Dean or Other Administrator	32	25	90	70
College Trustees or University Regents	20	16	5	4

Exemption

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	14	8	2	1
Faculty Member or Group	127	70	135	82
Dean or Other Administrator	33	18	27	16
College Trustees or University Regents	7	4	0	0

Placement

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	37	16	1	1
Faculty Member or Group	153	67	150	86
Dean or Other Administrator	27	12	21	12
College Trustees or University Regents	12	5	2	1

Proficiency

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	6	3	0	0
Faculty Member or Group	153	87	115	93
Dean or Other Administrator	13	7	7	6
College Trustees or University Regents	3	2	2	2

Graduation

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	21	22	4	5
Faculty Member or Group	49	51	61	77
Dean or Other Administrator	12	12	11	14
College Trustees or University Regents	15	15	3	4

Respondents' reports indicate that 44% (55) of writing assessments at public institutions conducted for admission purposes are mandated by external authorities, but only 5% (6) at private institutions. Following the pattern for all respondents, faculty at public institutions appear to have more authority in assessments conducted for other purposes. Most assessments for exemption are mandated by a faculty member or group, 70% (127) at public institutions and 82% (135) at private institutions. Most assessments for placement are mandated by a faculty member or group, 67% (153) at public institutions, and 86% (150) at private institutions, as are most assessments for proficiency, 87% (153) at public institutions, 93% (115) at private. Several assessments for placement, however, are mandated by a state or regional authority, 16% (37) at public institutions.

Respondent Opinions

As noted in the introduction, the three final questions on the survey elicited the opinions of respondents with respect to the assessment of writing skills at their institutions on a four-point scale ranging from "Agree Strongly," to "Disagree Strongly." Most respondents agreed or agreed strongly that the assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at their campuses. Further, most agreed or agreed strongly that writing assessment has had a good influence on writing instruction. Over half were satisfied with the writing assessment methods employed at their institutions. However, a considerable number of respondents for their institutions either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus." Thus, many of the respondents are unhappy with their present circumstances in the area of writing assessment (See Table 41).

Table 41
Respondent Opinions

A. The assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at our campus.

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	83	32	41	19
Agree	127	49	106	48
Disagree	38	15	53	24
Disagree Strongly	9	4	20	9

B. The assessment of writing skills has had a good influence on writing instruction at our campus.

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	87	33	38	17
Agree	143	55	140	64
Disagree	25	10	30	14
Disagree Strongly	6	2	12	5

C. I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus.

	Public		Private	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	30	12	27	12
Agree	124	48	106	46
Disagree	82	32	72	31
Disagree Strongly	23	9	24	10

Following the pattern for all respondents, most of the respondents agreed, or agreed strongly, that the assessment of writing skills had a big impact and a good on writing instruction at their campuses. In a similar vein, most indicated satisfaction with the methods used to assess writing at their campuses (see Table 41).

SECTION IV. RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY 2 YEAR/ 4 YEAR STATUS OF INSTITUTION

As noted in the introduction to this report, based on data supplied by the United States Department of Education, demographic information about each institution was collected. In one question, respondents were asked to identify the 2 year or 4 year status of the institution. One hundred, seventy-four of the 2 year institutions and 340 of the 4 year institutions responded to this question. This section of the report provides results of responses to selected survey questions categorized by the reported 2 year/4 year status of the institution.

Assessment Methods and Decisions Based on Assessment Results

Which Decisions are Based on the Assessment of Writing Skills?

The numbers and percentages of the respondents at 2 year and 4 year institutions who indicated whether or not they based certain decisions, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills are as follows:

Table 42
Decisions Based on Any Type of Assessment of Writing Skills
Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	35	21	190	58
No	130	79	139	42

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	108	65	268	82
No	58	35	57	18

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	151	91	265	80
No	15	9	66	20

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	118	74	182	56
No	42	26	143	44

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	38	24	135	41
No	122	76	191	59

Following the pattern found for all respondents, for institutions which indicated that decisions on their campuses are based, in whole or in part, on any type of assessment of writing skills, most use some form of writing assessment for placement and exemption decisions and a substantial number use writing assessment for the purpose of assessing proficiency. Relatively fewer institutions use writing assessment for the other purposes. Between the two groups, however, the percentages sometimes vary widely. Not surprisingly, given the open admission policy of many 2 year institutions, relatively few of them reported assessing writing for admission purposes. Twenty-one percent of the 2 year institutions assessed writing for this purpose compared to 58% of the 4-year institutions. Sixty-five percent of the 2 year institutions report using some form of writing assessment for exemption purposes. In comparison, 82% of the 4 year institutions assess writing for this purpose. Thus, it seems that more of the 4 year institutions assess writing for the purposes of admission and exemption than do the 2 year institutions.

For placement purposes, however, the pattern is reversed, with relatively more of the 2 year than the 4 year institutions reporting that they use writing assessment for placement purposes. Ninety-one percent of the 2 year institutions compared to 80% of the 4 year institutions report using some form of writing assessment for this purpose. A considerable number of institutions in both categories use writing assessment to make decisions regarding proficiency, but again, the percentages vary widely. Seventy-four of the 2 year institutions compared to 54% of the 4 year institutions report that they assess writing for the purpose of making decisions about proficiency. The results thus suggest that in comparison to 4 year institutions, relatively more of the 2 year institutions assess writing for placement and proficiency purpose.

For making decisions about graduation, the pattern is reversed, with, not surprisingly, relatively more of the 4 year institutions assessing writing for this purpose. Twenty-four percent of the 2 year institutions report using writing assessment as a condition of graduation compared to 41% of the 4 year institutions.

What Methods are Used for the Different Assessment Purposes?

As noted in the section for all respondents, results in this section must be interpreted cautiously. Approximate numbers of institutions of 2 year and 4 year status using multiple choice exams, timed writing samples and/or portfolios alone, or in combination with another method are reported in Table 43. The estimates for multiple choice and timed writing samples are based on the numbers of institutions who responded to specific questions regarding the development and implementation of those particular assessment methods. The estimates for portfolios are based upon the number of institutions reporting their use for each of the purposes in response to question 2. Because respondents at a number of the institutions which use writing assessment for particular decisions failed to respond to question 2, the numbers reported for portfolios may be an underestimate of their actual use.

Table 43
Approximate Numbers of Institutions Using Multiple Choice Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	43	99	150	79
Timed Writing	24	56	75	39
Portfolio	2	5	29	15

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	79	73	176	66
Timed Writing	77	71	191	71
Portfolio	10	9	36	13

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	129	85	183	69
Timed Writing	109	72	210	79
Portfolio	3	2	19	7

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	61	52	65	36
Timed Writing	102	86	136	75
Portfolio	34	29	75	41

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	27	71	51	38
Timed Writing	34	89	91	67
Portfolio	14	37	31	23

Responses indicate that approximately 99% of the 2 year institutions which indicate they assess writing to make decisions about admission use multiple choice exams, compared to 60% of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 56% of the 2 year institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 39% of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 5% of the 2 year institutions use portfolios, compared to 15% of the 4 year institutions. Of the institutions assessing writing to make decisions about exemption, approximately 73% of the 2 year and 66% of the 4 year institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 71% of the 2 year institutions use timed writing samples. The same percent (71%) of the 4 year institutions use timed writing samples. Approximately 9% of the 2 year institutions use portfolios, compared to 13% of the 4 year institutions for making decisions about exemption.

Of the institutions assessing writing to make decisions about placement, approximately 85% of the 2 year and 69% of the 4 year institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 72% of the 2 year institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 79% of the 4 year. Approximately 2% of the 2 year institutions report using portfolios to make placement decisions, compared to 7% of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions assessing writing to make decisions about proficiency, approximately 52% of the 2 year and 36% of the 4 year institutions use multiple choice exams. Approximately 86% of the 2 year institutions use timed writing samples, compared to 75% of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 29% of the 2 year institutions use portfolios to make decisions about proficiency, compared to 41% of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions assessing writing to make decisions about graduation, approximately 71% of the 2 year institutions use multiple choice exams, compared to 38% of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 89% of the 2 year institutions use timed writing samples for this purpose, compared to 67% of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 29% of the 2 year institutions use portfolios, compared to 41% of the 4 year institutions.

Practices Associated with Timed Writing Samples

As noted in the section for all respondents, several of the survey questions focused on the assessment process, asking who develops, scores, and/or makes decisions about the results of particular exams, how particular exams are implemented and scored, and what kinds of feedback students receive. Tables in this section of the report provide data on these questions with responses categorized by the 2 year/4 year status of the institution.

How Many Samples are Collected in Timed Writing Assessments?

Table 44
Numbers of Writing Samples Collected in Writing Assessments
Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
One	9	90	34	83
Two	1	10	4	10
Three	0	0	0	0
Four or More	0	0	3	7

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
One	46	79	107	80
Two	7	12	15	11
Three	3	5	3	2
Four or more	2	3	8	6

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
One	63	89	139	81
Two	4	5	20	12
Three	2	3	4	2
Four or More	2	3	8	5

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
One	45	65	58	61
Two	6	9	12	13
Three	5	7	4	4
Four or More	13	19	21	22

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
One	14	74	52	85
Two	1	5	5	8
Three	0	0	3	5
Four or More	4	21	1	2

Of the institutions indicating that timed writing samples are collected to make decisions about admission, approximately 90% (9) of the 2 year institutions and approximately 83% (34) of the four year institutions rely on a single sample. For decisions about exemption, approximately 79% (46) of the 2 year institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 80% (107) of the 4 year. For decisions about placement, approximately 89% (63) of the 2 year institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 81% (139) of the 4 year. For decisions about proficiency, approximately 65% (45) of the 2 year institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 61% (58) of the 4 year. For decisions about graduation, approximately 74% (14) of the 2 year institutions rely on a single sample, compared to 85% (52) of the 4 year.

How Much Time Is Allowed for Writing in Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted in the section for all respondents, the amount of time students are allowed to complete writing samples is an issue of concern to professionals who want to see a closer match between assessment procedures and teachers' views of effective pedagogy, in which students are encouraged to plan and revise their writing. Assessments which allow brief amounts of time tap only first draft writing. To gather information about this issue, the survey asked respondents who used timed writing samples to make assessment decisions to indicate the amount of time allowed per sample. The results, categorized by the 2 year/4 year status of the institution are presented in Table 45.

Table 45
Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
<30	7	44	15	33
31-60	6	38	19	42
61-90	3	19	4	9
90+	0	0	7	16

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
<30	6	9	24	15
31-60	31	45	70	45
61-90	18	26	27	17
90+	14	20	34	22

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
<30	26	25	35	17
31-60	53	52	119	57
61-90	11	11	33	16
90+	12	12	23	11

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
<30	8	9	10	8
31-60	37	40	54	43
61-90	21	22	23	18
90+	27	29	39	31

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
<30	3	11	3	4
31-60	13	46	30	38
61-90	4	14	14	18
90+	8	29	32	40

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *admission*, approximately 44% (7) of the 2 year institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 33% (15) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 38% (6) of the 2 year institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 42% (19) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 19% (3) of the 2 year institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 9% (4) of the 4 year. None of the 2 year institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 16% (7) of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *exemption*, approximately 9% (6) of the 2 year institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 15% (24) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 45% (31) of the 2 year institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 45% (70) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 26% (18) of the 2 year institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 17% (27) of the 4 year. Approximately 20% (14) of the 2 year institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 22% (34) of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *placement*, approximately 25% (26) of the 2 year institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 17% (35) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 52% (53) of the 2 year institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 57% (119) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 11% (11) of the 2 year institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 16% (33) of the 4 year. Approximately 12% (12) of the 2 year institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 11% (23) of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *proficiency*, approximately 9% (8) of the 2 year institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 8% (10) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 40% (37) of the 2 year institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 43% (54) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 22% (21) of the 2 year institutions allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 18% (23) of the 4 year. Approximately 29% (27) of the 2 year institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 31% (39) of the 4 year institutions.

Of the institutions indicating they use timed writing samples in assessment to make decisions about *graduation*, approximately 11% (3) of the 2 year institutions allow 30 minutes or less, compared to 4% (3) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 46% (13) of the 2 year institutions allow 31 to 60 minutes, compared to 38% (30) of the 4 year institutions. Approximately 14% (4) of the 2 year institution allow 61 to 90 minutes per sample, compared to 18% (14) of the 4 year. Approximately 29% (8) of the 2 year institutions allow more than 90 minutes, compared to 40% (32) of the 4 year institutions.

Are Prewriting and/or Revising Activities Encouraged When Timed Writing Samples Are Collected?

In order to gather information about the degree to which assessment procedures mirrored typical patterns in writing instruction, respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not they encourage prewriting and/or revising activities during timed writing tasks. Table 46 presents responses to these questions categorized by the 2 year/4 year status of the institutions.

Table 46
Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples
Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	8	35	11	19
No	15	65	48	81

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	31	43	75	45
No	41	57	92	55

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	50	48	117	54
No	55	52	98	46

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	69	70	102	72
No	29	30	40	28

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	19	54	60	68
No	16	46	28	32

Overall, the patterns of responses categorized by 2 year/4 year of institutions mirror the patterns found for all respondents together. That is, there does not seem to be any important variation from the pattern according to the 2 year/4 year status of the institution. The only exception may be practices during assessment for admission purposes. Of the institutions responding to this question, 35% (8) of the 2 year institutions, and 19% (11) of the 4 year institutions indicated that they did encourage prewriting and/or revising activities when timed writing samples were collected for admissions purposes. It should be noted however, that the percentages in this case are based on very small numbers. Only 24 of the 2 year institutions reported that they used timed writing assessment for admissions purposes, and of those, 23 responded to the question about feedback.

When timed samples were collected for exemption purposes, 43% (31) of the 2 year institutions and 45% (75) of the 4 year institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected for placement purposes, 50% (48) of the 2 year institutions and 54% (117) of the 4 year institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected to assess proficiency, 70% (69) of the 2 year institutions and 72% (102) of the 4 year institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities. When timed samples were collected for graduation purposes, 54% (19) of the 2 year institutions and 68% (60) of the 4 year institutions indicated they encouraged these kinds of process activities.

Is Feedback Provided to Students about the Results of Timed Writing Assessments?

As noted above, an issue in assessment procedures is the question of whether students should receive feedback about their performance. For pragmatic reasons, (expense ne) some institutions may not provide feedback. However me educators argue th ssessment should contribute to learning and that feedback nus a necessary part of the assessment process. To gather information relevant to this issue, one question on the survey asked whether students had to receive feedback about their performance when timed writing samples were collected. Responses to this question are categorized in Table 47 according to the 2 year/4 year status of the institutions responding.

Table 47
Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s)
Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	10	43	19	27
Yes, if request	7	30	17	24
No, no feedback	6	26	35	49

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	35	47	43	23
Yes, if request	23	31	100	55
No, no feedback	16	22	40	22

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	52	47	61	27
Yes, if request	45	41	115	52
No, no feedback	14	13	46	21

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	54	55	65	46
Yes, if request	40	41	64	45
No, no feedback	4	4	13	9

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	15	47	28	31
Yes, if request	15	47	57	64
No, no feedback	2	6	4	4

Of the institutions responding to this question, 26% (6) of the 2 year and 49% (35) of the 4 year institutions report that they do not provide feedback to students about their performance on timed writing samples during the admiss ns process. In the case of assessments conducted for exemption purposes, 22% (16) of ne 2 year and 22% (40) of the 4 year institutions report that they do not provide feedback. In the case of assessments conducted for placement purposes, 13% (14) of the 2 year and 21% (46) of the 4 year institutions report that they do not provide feedback.

Participants in the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction, some professionals argue for the value of direct involvement of faculty in the assessment process. They point out that when faculty are involved in development, assessments are more likely to be grounded in the faculty's "theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (Greenberg, 1992, 15). It has also been argued that participation in the assessment process can serve as a vehicle for effective staff development, with the caution that "a good test can have as positive an effect on mediocre teaching as a bad test has negative effects on teaching" (Lucas, 1988, 2). To gather information about the extent of faculty involvement in the writing assessment process in postsecondary institutions, specific questions about faculty involvement were included in the survey.

Who Develops Multiple Choice Exams?

Following the pattern for all respondents, among the institutions who use multiple choice exams, most exams are developed by the staff of a commercial agency (such as the ACT, SAT, or CLEP) for the assessment of writing at the pre-freshman and freshman levels for admission, regardless of the size of the institution. For admission, 74% of the 2 year and 97% of the 4 year institutions which responded to this question employ a commercial agency's exams. As noted previously, the widespread use of commercially developed exams is not surprising, since standardized tests are commonly used, particularly for admission and exemption purposes (such as the AP English examination). Most institutions responding to this question, regardless of their 2 year/4 year status, report using a commercial exam for these purposes (see Table 48). However, following the pattern for all respondents, of those using multiple choice exams to assess writing proficiency for entry to the next level of coursework, the multiple choice exams are developed at most 2 year institutions 64% (38) by their own faculty or staff, and at many 4 year institutions by their own faculty or staff 47% (28). Surprisingly, approximately 48 percent of the 4 year institutions responding to this question reported that they used commercial exams for assessing writing proficiency.

Table 48
Participants in the Development of Multiple Choice Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	29	74	144	97
Faculty/Staff at College or University	5	13	3	2
State Agency or Department	5	13	1	1

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	51	67	144	86
Faculty/Staff at College or University	19	25	19	11
State Agency or Department	6	8	5	3

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	91	76	130	77
Faculty/Staff at College or University	15	13	28	17
State Agency or Department	13	11	10	6

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	15	25	29	48
Faculty/Staff at College or University	38	64	28	47
State Agency or Department	6	10	3	5

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	6	22	18	37
Faculty/Staff at College or University	13	48	23	47
State Agency or Department	8	30	8	16

Who Sets the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams?

The individual who sets the standards (e.g., who decides which scores are acceptable) at institutions using multiple choice writing assessments for the purpose of admission is predominantly the administrator at the college or university, at 4 year (95, 69%) institutions. In contrast, at 2 year institutions, the individual(s) who set the standard are primarily faculty or staff (21, 58%). Following the pattern for all respondents, a relatively large number of institutions report involving their faculty in assessment for exemption purposes, (51, 67%) at 2 year institutions and (121, 78%) at 4 year institutions. For all other purposes it is predominantly the faculty or staff at most institutions who set the standards, regardless of the 2 year/4 year status of the institution (see Table 49).

Table 49
Participants in Setting the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	10	28	95	69
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	21	58	34	25
State Agency or Department	5	14	8	6

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	15	20	30	19
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	51	67	121	78
State Agency or Department	10	13	5	3

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	12	10	22	13
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	91	79	139	84
State Agency or Department	12	10	5	3

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	1	2	7	9
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	57	95	68	88
State Agency or Department	2	3	2	3

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	2	8	8	14
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	17	65	44	77
State Agency or Department	7	27	5	9

Who Develops the Topics for Timed Writing Samples?

In contrast to the results for multiple choice exams, among the institutions that use timed writing samples for their assessment purposes, most of the assessments were developed by faculty or staff at 2 year institutions. Of the institutions responding to this question, 74% (17) of the 2 year institutions indicate that faculty or staff develop their timed writing exams for admission purposes. However, proportionately fewer of the 4 year institutions have exams for this purpose which are developed by faculty or staff (33, 46%). Timed writing exams are developed by commercial agencies at 49% of the institutions responding to this question. These data suggest that 4 year institutions may rely more often on the commonly used standardized tests which include a writing sample than 2 year institutions.

With regard to exemption, most respondents indicated that their timed writing exams are developed by faculty or staff, regardless of the 2 year/4 year status of the institutions. Timed writing exams used for placement, entry, and graduation decisions are also predominantly developed by faculty or staff at their own colleges or universities regardless of the institutions status, although a fair number of 2 year institutions report using timed writing exams developed by a state agency or department (10, 29%) (see Table 50).

Table 50
Participants in the Development of Timed Writing Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	5	22	35	49
Faculty/Staff at College or University	17	74	33	46
State Agency or Department	1	4	3	4

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	17	22	54	30
Faculty/Staff at College or University	55	72	123	69
State Agency or Department	4	5	2	1

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	9	8	16	8
Faculty/Staff at College or University	92	87	178	89
State Agency or Department	5	5	7	3

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	4	4	4	3
Faculty/Staff at College or University	95	93	130	97
State Agency or Department	3	3	0	0

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	3	9	6	7
Faculty/Staff at College or University	21	62	79	88
State Agency or Department	10	29	5	5

Who Sets the Standards for the Evaluation of Timed Writing Samples?

Data with regard to the individual who sets the standards at institutions using timed writing exams reflected the same pattern as did responses in the previous question, a pattern which diverges somewhat from the pattern found for all respondents. For the admissions process, at most of the 2 year institutions responding to this question, the decision does not come from the "top down," or the administration. Rather, in many cases, standard setting is done by faculty and/or staff (16, 73%). At 4 year institutions, in contrast, the responsibility for standard setting is equally divided between administrators (36, 49%) and faculty/staff (36, 49%). For the remaining purposes, standards are set predominantly by the faculty or staff, regardless of the 2 year/4 year status of the institution (see Table 51), although timed writing exams at a fair number of 2 year institutions have standards set by a state agency or department (11, 32%).

Table 51
Participants in Setting the Standards for Timed Writing Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	5	23	36	49
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	16	73	36	49
State Agency or Department	1	4	1	1

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	7	9	13	7
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	61	80	167	92
State Agency or Department	8	11	1	1

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	3	3	7	3
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	92	89	203	95
State Agency or Department	8	8	4	2

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	2	2	4	3
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	97	96	138	97
State Agency or Department	2	2	0	0

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Administrator at Own Institution	1	3	8	9
Faculty/Staff at Own Institution	22	65	80	86
State Agency or Department	11	32	5	5

Who Scores the Timed Writing Samples?

The individuals who score the timed writing samples reflect the pattern of practices reported in the data regarding test development and standard setting. For admission, nearly half of the scoring is conducted by a commercial agency at most 4 year institutions (51%), as would be expected if they are standardized tests. At 2 year institutions, however, (13, 59%) of the institutions responding to this question report that exams are scored by faculty at their own campus. For the other purposes, most timed writing samples are scored by faculty or staff at their own institution, regardless of 2 year/4 year status (see Table 52).

Table 52
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	5	23	35	51
Faculty at Own Campus	13	59	22	32
Testing Staff at Own Campus	4	18	11	16

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	12	16	38	21
Faculty at Own Campus	56	75	134	75
Testing Staff at Own Campus	7	9	8	4

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	4	4	15	8
Faculty at Own Campus	84	85	179	90
Testing Staff at Own Campus	11	11	5	2

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	1	1	1	1
Faculty at Own Campus	96	95	134	98
Testing Staff at Own Campus	4	4	2	1

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Commercial Agency	4	13	6	7
Faculty at Own Campus	23	77	70	85
Testing Staff at Own Campus	3	10	6	7

Authority over the Assessment Process

As noted in the introduction to this report, authority over the assessment process is an issue of concern to educators because externally mandated testing programs may usurp faculty authority and diminish their professional prerogatives. To gather information relevant to this issue, the survey asked respondents to identify the primary governing authority over the assessment process for each assessment purpose.

Table 53
Governing Authority Over the Assessment Process by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

Admission

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	42	58	19	11
Faculty Member or Group	10	14	34	19
Dean or Other Administrator	12	16	108	61
College Trustees or University Regents	9	12	16	9

Exemption

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	11	11	4	2
Faculty Member or Group	60	59	199	83
Dean or Other Administrator	26	26	34	14
College Trustees or University Regents	4	4	3	1

Placement

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	27	18	11	4
Faculty Member or Group	88	60	211	83
Dean or Other Administrator	23	16	25	10
College Trustees or University Regents	8	5	6	2

Proficiency

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	5	4	1	1
Faculty Member or Group	97	87	168	91
Dean or Other Administrator	8	7	12	7
College Trustees or University Regents	2	2	3	2

Graduation

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	12	26	13	10
Faculty Member or Group	21	46	88	69
Dean or Other Administrator	8	17	15	12
College Trustees or University Regents	5	11	12	9

Respondents' reports indicate that 58% (42) of writing assessments at 2 year institutions conducted for admission purposes are mandated by external authorities, but only 11% (19) at 4 year institutions. Following the pattern for all respondents, faculty appear to have more authority in assessments conducted for other purposes, although the proportions vary somewhat according to 2 year or 4 year classification. Most assessments for exemption are mandated by a faculty member or group, 59% (69) at 2 year institutions, but proportionately more 83% (199) at 4 year institutions. Most assessments for placement are mandated by a faculty member or group, 60% (88) at 2 year institutions, but proportionately more 83% (211) at 4 year institutions. Authority for making decisions about proficiency appears to be distributed similarly, regardless of the 2 year/4 year status of the institution. Of the 2 year institutions responding to this question, 87% (97) report faculty as the governing authority, 91% (168) at 4 year institutions. Several assessments, however, are mandated by a state or regional authority at 2 year institutions, for placement (27, 18%) and for graduation (12, 26%).

Respondent Opinions

As noted in the introduction, the three final questions on the survey elicited the opinions of respondents with respect to the assessment of writing skills at their institutions on a four-point scale ranging from "Agree Strongly," to "Disagree Strongly." Most respondents agreed or agreed strongly that the assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at their campuses, regardless of their 2 year/4 year classification. Proportionately more of the respondents at 2 year institutions (62, 39%), however, agreed "strongly" than did respondents at 4 year institutions (62, 20%). Approximately equal proportions of the respondents at 2 year institutions (81, 50) and at 4 year (152, 49%) simply agreed. On the whole, then, proportionately more of the respondents at 2 year institutions agreed that the assessment of writing skills has had a big impact on writing instruction at their campuses, 89% at 2 year institutions and 69% at 4 year institutions. A similar pattern appears with respect to the statement "The assessment of writing skills has had a good impact on writing instruction at our campus. Proportionately fewer respondents at 4 year institutions (56, 18%) strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to respondents at 2 year institutions (69, 42%). Over half of the institutions were satisfied with the writing assessment methods employed at their institutions, regardless of their 2 year or 4 year classification, and the proportions of those who agreed strongly and agreed are similar at each type of institution. Following the pattern for all respondents, a considerable number of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus," (62, 38%) at 2 year institutions and (138, 44%) at 4 year institutions. Thus, many of the respondents are unhappy with their present circumstances in the area of writing assessment at both 2 year and 4 year institutions (See Table 54).

Table 54

Respondent Opinions About the Assessment of Writing Skills by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution

The assessment of writing skills has had a *big* impact on writing instruction at our campus.

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	62	39	62	20
Agree	81	50	152	49
Disagree	15	9	75	24
Disagree Strongly	3	2	23	7

The assessment of writing skills has had a *good* impact on writing instruction at our campus.

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	69	42	56	18
Agree	82	49	200	64
Disagree	11	7	44	14
Disagree Strongly	4	2	13	4

I am satisfied with the methods used to assess writing at our campus.

	2 Year		4 Year	
	#	%	#	%
Agree Strongly	24	14	33	10
Agree	80	48	149	47
Disagree	49	30	104	33
Disagree Strongly	13	8	34	11

SECTION V. RESPONDENTS' REPORTS OF SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION RELATED TO SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Additional analyses compared respondents' reports of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with assessment methods with their responses to other questions. Of interest is the cross-tabulation of data reported about assessments in which particular methods are employed with respondents' reports of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Table 55 shows the results for each assessment purpose and for all assessment purposes combined. Of the total number of assessments in which multiple choice methods were employed (for all purposes combined) 59% of these respondents indicated satisfaction with the methods employed. Of the assessments in which timed writing samples were used, 62% of these respondents indicated satisfaction. Of the assessments in which portfolios were used, 69% of these respondents indicated satisfaction. Thus, when all purposes are combined, the proportions of respondents who are satisfied when multiple choice and timed writing methods are employed at their campuses appear to be similar, regardless of the particular method. In relation to the other two methods, slightly more respondents report satisfaction when portfolios are used.

Table 55
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction with Assessments Using Multiple Choice, Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	520	59	363	41
Timed Writing	614	62	369	38
Portfolio	163	69	74	31

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	101	55	81	45
Timed Writing	55	60	37	40
Portfolio	19	68	9	32

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	133	56	103	44
Timed Writing	150	61	97	39
Portfolio	31	70	13	30

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	162	59	114	41
Timed Writing	184	62	112	38
Portfolio	13	65	7	35

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	77	66	39	34
Timed Writing	149	65	79	35
Portfolio	69	68	33	32

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Multiple Choice	47	64	26	36
Timed Writing	76	63	44	37
Portfolio	31	72	12	28

Table 56 shows the results of the cross-tabulation of respondents' reports of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the reported numbers of samples collected in timed writing exams. Of the reports of assessments in which one sample was collected (all purposes combined), 63% of the respondents indicated satisfaction; 66% when two samples were collected; 56% when three were collected; and 65% when four or more were collected. Thus, the proportions of respondents who report satisfaction appear to be roughly similar, regardless of the number of samples collected.

Table 56
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction
Related to the Numbers of Writing Samples Collected in Writing Assessments

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	353	63	207	37
Two	46	66	24	34
Three	14	56	11	44
Four or More	60	65	32	35

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	22	50	22	50
Two	3	60	2	40
Three	0	0	0	0
Four or More	3	60	2	40

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	96	65	52	35
Two	16	76	5	24
Three	3	38	5	62
Four or More	7	70	3	30

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	127	64	73	36
Two	13	62	8	38
Three	2	33	4	67
Four or More	15	50	15	50

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	66	64	37	36
Two	10	59	7	41
Three	7	78	2	22
Four or More	31	74	11	26

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
One	42	65	23	35
Two	4	67	2	33
Three	2	100	0	0
Four or More	4	80	1	20

A similar pattern was seen in the cross-tabulation of respondents' reports of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the reported time allowed in timed writing exams (see Table 57). Of the reports of assessments in which 30 minutes or less are allowed, (all purposes combined), 64% of the respondents also reported satisfaction. Of the reports of assessments in which 31 to 60 minutes are allowed, 61% of the respondents also reported satisfaction. Of the reports of assessments in which 61 to 90 are allowed, 62% of the respondents also reported satisfaction. Of the reports of assessments in which more than 90 minutes are allowed, 68% of the respondents also reported satisfaction. Thus, the proportions of respondents who report they are satisfied appear to be roughly similar, regardless of the time allowed for writing.

Table 57
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	86	64	49	36
31-60	258	61	164	39
61-90	95	62	58	38
90+	125	68	58	32

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	12	55	10	45
31-60	13	50	13	50
61-90	5	71	2	29
90+	3	50	3	50

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	17	59	12	41
31-60	57	58	41	42
61-90	30	70	13	30
90+	33	75	11	25

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	39	65	21	35
31-60	99	59	68	41
61-90	24	55	20	45
90+	22	71	9	29

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	14	78	4	22
31-60	62	70	26	30
61-90	23	55	19	45
90+	43	65	23	35

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
<30	4	67	2	33
31-60	27	63	16	37
61-90	13	76	4	24
90+	24	67	12	33

A somewhat different pattern begins to appear, however, in relation to prewriting and revising activities and in reported consequences for students. Cross-tabulations of respondents reports of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with responses to questions about these aspects of the assessments suggest that proportionally fewer respondents are satisfied with the assessment methods employed at their campuses when prewriting and revising activities are not encouraged (all purposes combined). Sixty-nine percent of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the assessment methods employed at their campuses when the assessments were those in which prewriting and revising activities were encouraged. A smaller number (56%) of the respondents reported satisfaction when the assessments were those in which prewriting and revising activities were not encouraged (see Table 58).

Table 58
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	357	69	163	31
No	249	56	198	44

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	13	68	6	32
No	33	54	28	46

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	72	70	31	30
No	69	54	58	46

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	104	65	56	35
No	86	57	64	43

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	114	70	49	30
No	37	55	30	45

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	54	72	21	28
No	24	57	18	43

A similar pattern occurs with regard to feedback (all purposes combined). For most of the assessments in which feedback is provided (71% automatic and 61% if requested) respondents reported satisfaction. Fewer (50%) of the respondents reported satisfaction with the methods employed at their campuses when feedback to students is not provided (see Table 59).

Table 59
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s)

Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s)

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	263	71	110	29
Yes, if request	286	61	185	39
No, no feedback	85	50	85	50

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	22	71	9	29
Yes, if request	11	46	13	54
No, no feedback	21	54	18	46

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	53	69	24	31
Yes, if request	79	66	41	34
No, no feedback	23	45	28	55

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	75	70	32	30
Yes, if request	94	60	63	40
No, no feedback	29	50	29	50

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	81	70	34	30
Yes, if request	60	60	40	40
No, no feedback	10	59	7	41

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, automatic	32	74	11	26
Yes, if request	42	60	28	40
No, no feedback	2	40	3	60

A similar pattern occurs in relation to consequences for students who fail to qualify for the regular freshman English course. When all purposes are combined, fewer respondents report satisfaction when alternatives indicated in the survey (courses, tutoring, retaking the exam), are unavailable. Sixty-four percent of the respondents report satisfaction when an alternative is required, 58% when an alternative is optional, and relatively fewer (51%) when not an option.

Table 60
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail to Qualify for the Regular Freshman English Course

All Consequences Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	339	64	189	36
Yes, optional at this campus	144	58	105	42
No, not an option at this campus	166	51	157	49

Take developmental course for credit.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	94	64	53	36
Yes, optional at this campus	15	56	12	44
No, not an option at this campus	54	55	45	45

Take developmental course for no credit.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	136	62	82	38
Yes, optional at this campus	17	53	15	47
No, not an option at this campus	27	47	30	53

Attend tutoring.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	59	63	34	37
Yes, optional at this campus	89	60	59	40
No, not an option at this campus	20	51	19	49

Retake exam until performance is satisfactory.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	50	71	20	29
Yes, optional at this campus	23	55	19	45
No, not an option at this campus	65	51	63	49

In regard to consequences for students who fail assessment of proficiency, a similar pattern appears. When all consequences are combined, sixty-six percent of the respondents report satisfaction when one of the alternative consequences (take a designated writing course, prepare a portfolio, retake the exam) is required, 71% when it is optional, and relatively fewer (55%) when not an option (see Table 61).

Table 61
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail Assessment of Proficiency for Entry into a Next Level of Coursework

All Consequences Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	202	66	102	34
Yes, optional at this campus	97	71	40	29
No, not an option at this campus	236	55	194	45

Prepare a portfolio and appeal.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	5	83	1	17
Yes, optional at this campus	40	70	17	30
No, not an option at this campus	76	56	59	44

Take and pass a designated writing course.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	134	65	73	35
Yes, optional at this campus	22	69	10	31
No, not an option at this campus	18	44	23	56

Retake exam an unlimited number of times.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	33	69	15	31
Yes, optional at this campus	18	69	8	31
No, not an option at this campus	74	57	56	43

Retake exam a limited number of times.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	30	70	13	30
Yes, optional at this campus	17	77	5	33
No, not an option at this campus	68	55	56	45

A somewhat similar pattern appears in regard to consequences for students who fail assessment as a condition for graduation. Seventy percent of the respondents report satisfaction when one of the alternative consequences (take a designated writing course, prepare a portfolio, retake the exam) is required, 56% when it is optional, and 59% when not an option (Table 62).

Table 62
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail Assessment as a Condition for Graduation

All Consequences Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	93	70	40	30
Yes, optional at this campus	48	56	38	44
No, not an option at this campus	170	59	118	41

Prepare a portfolio and appeal.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	3	75	1	25
Yes, optional at this campus	14	67	7	33
No, not an option at this campus	56	62	35	38

Take and pass a designated writing course.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	48	73	18	27
Yes, optional at this campus	17	50	17	50
No, not an option at this campus	29	56	23	44

Retake exam an unlimited number of times.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	28	65	15	35
Yes, optional at this campus	11	55	9	45
No, not an option at this campus	42	60	28	40

Retake exam a limited number of times.

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, required at this campus	14	70	6	30
Yes, optional at this campus	6	55	5	45
No, not an option at this campus	43	57	32	43

The data suggest then, that respondents may be somewhat less likely to be satisfied with the assessment methods employed at their campus when the assessments do not incorporate prewriting and revising activities and when students do not have recourse to alternative paths for satisfying requirements when they fail an assessment. Nevertheless, the numbers of respondents indicating satisfaction with the methods employed at their campuses is somewhat surprising.

Table 63
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Governing Authority for the Assessment Process

All Purposes Combined

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	86	61	56	39
Faculty Member or Group	577	61	363	39
Dean or Other Administrator	129	49	132	51
College/University Trustees or Regents	41	61	26	39

Admission

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	30	51	29	49
Faculty Member or Group	28	62	17	38
Dean or Other Administrator	58	50	57	50
College/University Trustees or Regents	13	52	12	48

Exemption

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	8	53	7	47
Faculty Member or Group	155	62	95	38
Dean or Other Administrator	27	47	31	53
College/University Trustees or Regents	5	71	2	29

Placement

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	27	73	10	27
Faculty Member or Group	168	58	121	42
Dean or Other Administrator	24	51	23	49
College/University Trustees or Regents	9	69	4	31

Proficiency

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	5	83	1	17
Faculty Member or Group	161	63	93	37
Dean or Other Administrator	9	47	10	53
College/University Trustees or Regents	3	60	2	40

Graduation

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	#	%	#	%
State or Regional Authority	16	64	9	36
Faculty Member or Group	65	64	37	36
Dean or Other Administrator	11	50	11	50
College/University Trustees or Regents	11	65	6	35

The results for all purposes combined suggest that proportionately few respondents report satisfaction when assessments are mandated by a dean or other administrator than when they are mandated by other groups. When all purposes are combined, 61% of the respondents report satisfaction when the assessments are mandated by a state or regional authority, 61% when a faculty member or group is the governing authority, 49% when the assessments are mandated by a dean or other administrator, and 61% when the assessments are mandated by college trustees or university regents (see Table 63).

Conclusion

The portrait of writing assessment practices in the United States provided by the survey results is not always encouraging. Given the generally common use of standardized tests such as the ACT and the SAT for admission and exemption purposes, it is not surprising that the use of multiple choice methods for assessing writing should be reported so frequently. However, given expressed concern among many professionals about the limitations of multiple-choice tests, in particular the mismatch of such tests with emerging theoretical conceptions of writing as a complex, multi-faceted activity, the rather widespread use of multiple choice exams to assess writing proficiency for entry into the next level of coursework and the use of multiple choice methods to assess writing as a condition for graduation (45% of the 172 institutions that assess writing for this purpose) is dismaying. It should be noted, however, that the estimates for use of multiple choice exams reported in Table 3 include institutions which are using multiple choice exams in combination with another method. Of the institutions which report using the assessment of writing to make decisions about admission, 82 (35%) indicated that they relied on multiple choice methods alone, about exemption, 42 (11%), about placement, 92 (22%), but about proficiency, only 6 (2%) and about graduation, only 7 (4%).

The results also suggest that a growing number of institutions have turned to direct assessment of writing, particularly for making decisions about exemption, placement, proficiency and graduation purposes. For each of these purposes, over 70% of the institutions which assess writing report using timed writing samples. The results also suggest a fairly widespread use of direct assessment of writing for admission purposes. Forty-four percent of the institutions which assess writing to make decisions about admission use timed writing samples for this purpose. Given the growing challenge to the practice of single sample assessment of writing, however, the finding that so many institutions rely on single sample assessment is a matter of concern. Across all purposes, very few institutions collect more than one sample when timed writing samples are collected. Again, however, it should be noted that many institutions may be collecting single samples in combination with some other method such as multiple choice assessment, portfolios, or a method not addressed by the survey. Of the institutions which assess writing for each of the purposes identified by the survey, relatively few indicated that they relied solely on timed writing assessment for decisions about admission 18 (8%), about exemption 76 (20%), about placement 107 (18%). In relation to the other purposes, the practice of relying solely on the collection of timed writing samples to make decisions about proficiency 88 (26%) and about graduation 57 (33%) was somewhat more frequent. However, one would also expect that information from any particular assessment method or combination of methods would be supplemented by information from other sources such performance in coursework. Nevertheless, the widespread use of single sample assessment of writing is surprising.

The number of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the assessment methods employed at their campuses is also somewhat surprising, particularly in relation to multiple choice methods. Again, however, it should be noted that the multiple choice methods may have been employed in combination with other methods, a not uncommon practice. Also, since the survey question asked respondents about satisfaction with methods as a whole, regardless of purpose, the survey could not address specific areas of concern that respondents may have had. Further, the satisfaction reported by many respondents may also have been influenced generally by a recognition that assessment can provide useful information to faculty and administrators alike and have a positive impact on curriculum. In general, most respondents (75%) agreed that the assessment of writing skills had a good influence on writing instruction at their campuses. Nevertheless, a substantial number of respondents disagreed with this positive view of the impact of assessment. Their disagreement reminds us that while assessments of writing may have potential benefits, they may be based on inadequate methods, they may interfere with the educational process, and they may misrepresent the abilities of some students.

Heartening though, is the indication of widespread faculty involvement at those institutions where writing is assessed for the various purposes. The data suggest that faculty are very involved in several stages of the assessment process for each of the purposes, especially so, subsequent to admission. Further, there seems to be no widespread trend toward externally mandated assessment. For the assessment purposes of granting exemption, placing students in appropriate courses and determining proficiency for entry into next levels of coursework and for graduation, in most cases, members of the faculty govern the assessment process.

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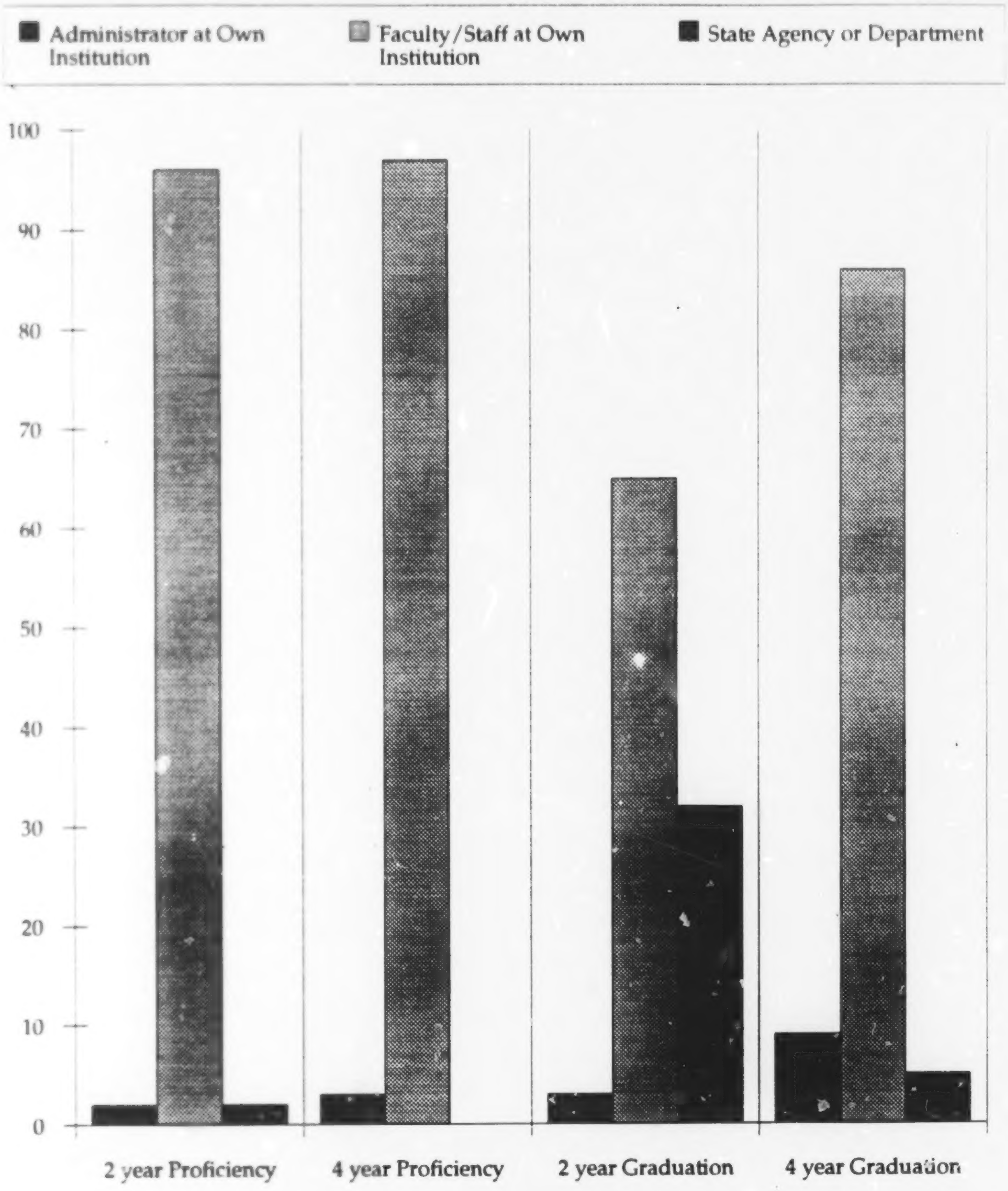
Participants in Setting the Standards for Timed Writing Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution



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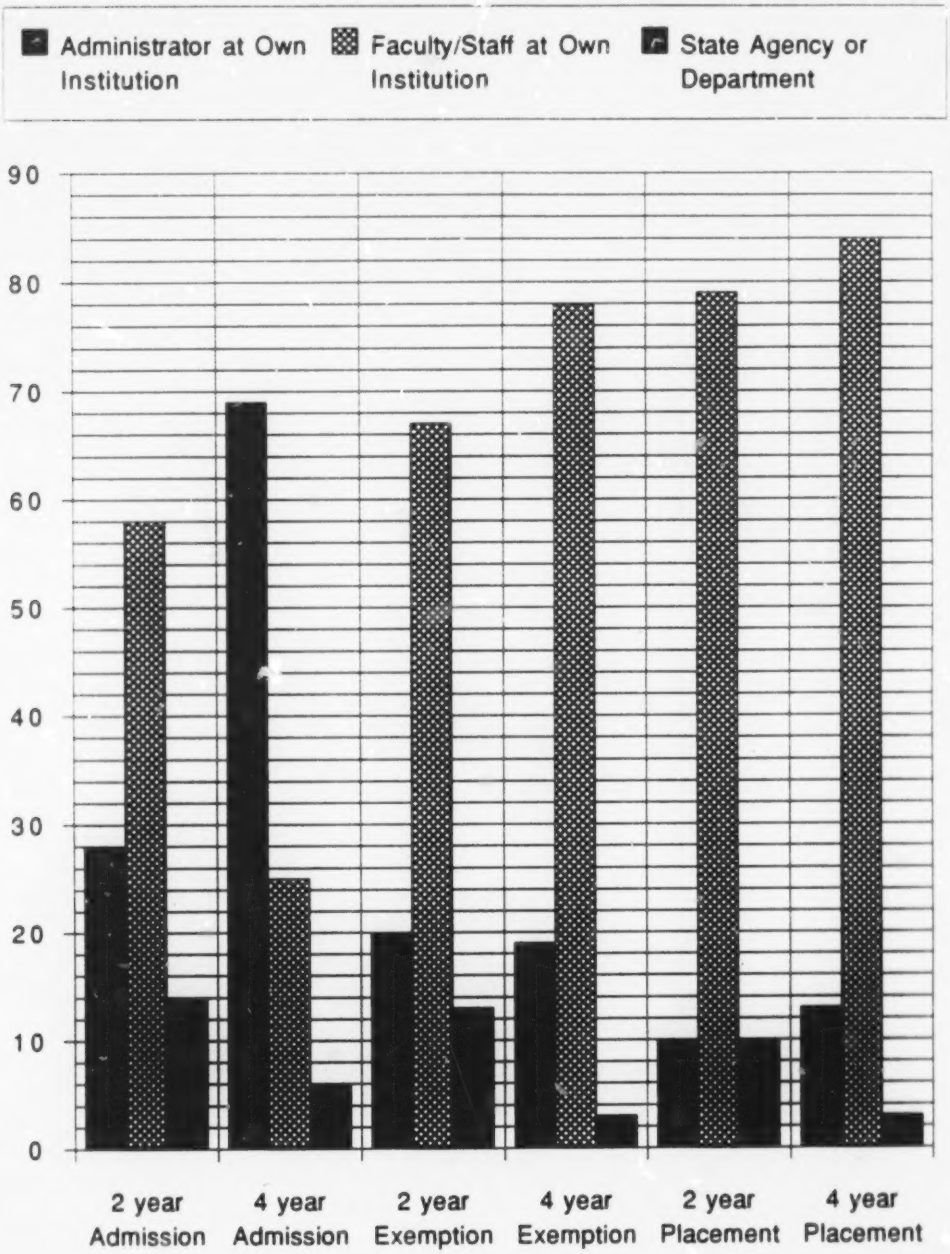

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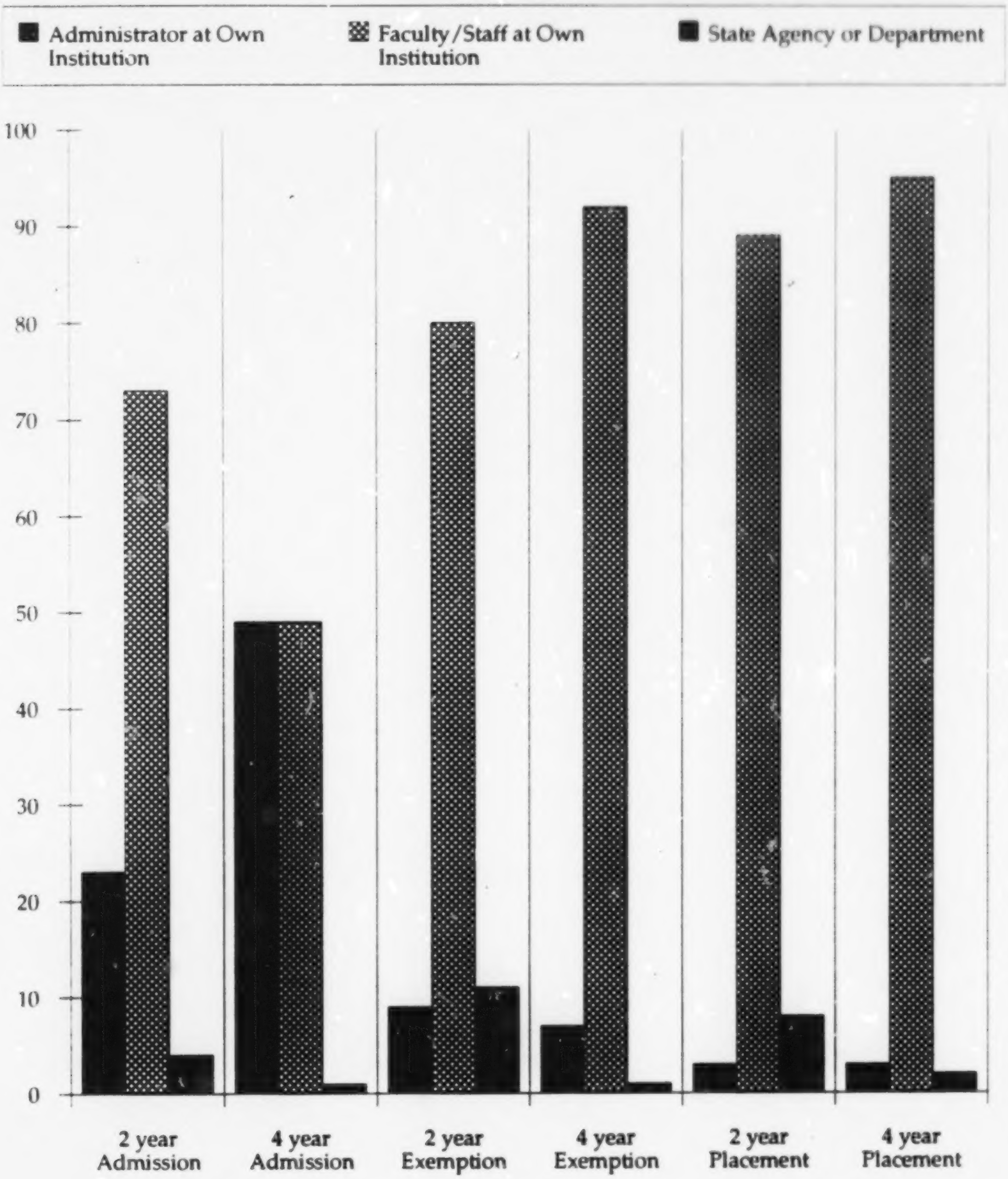
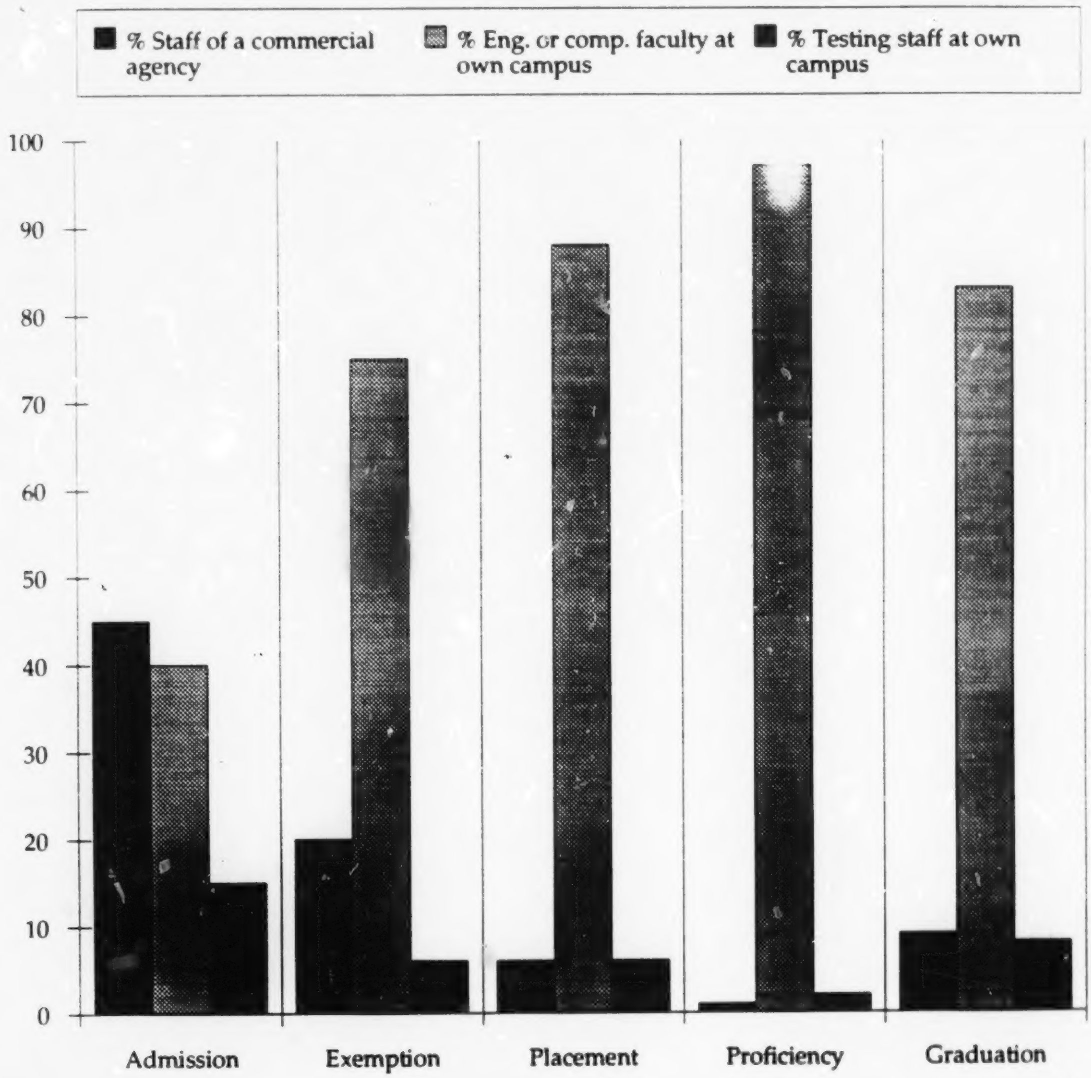
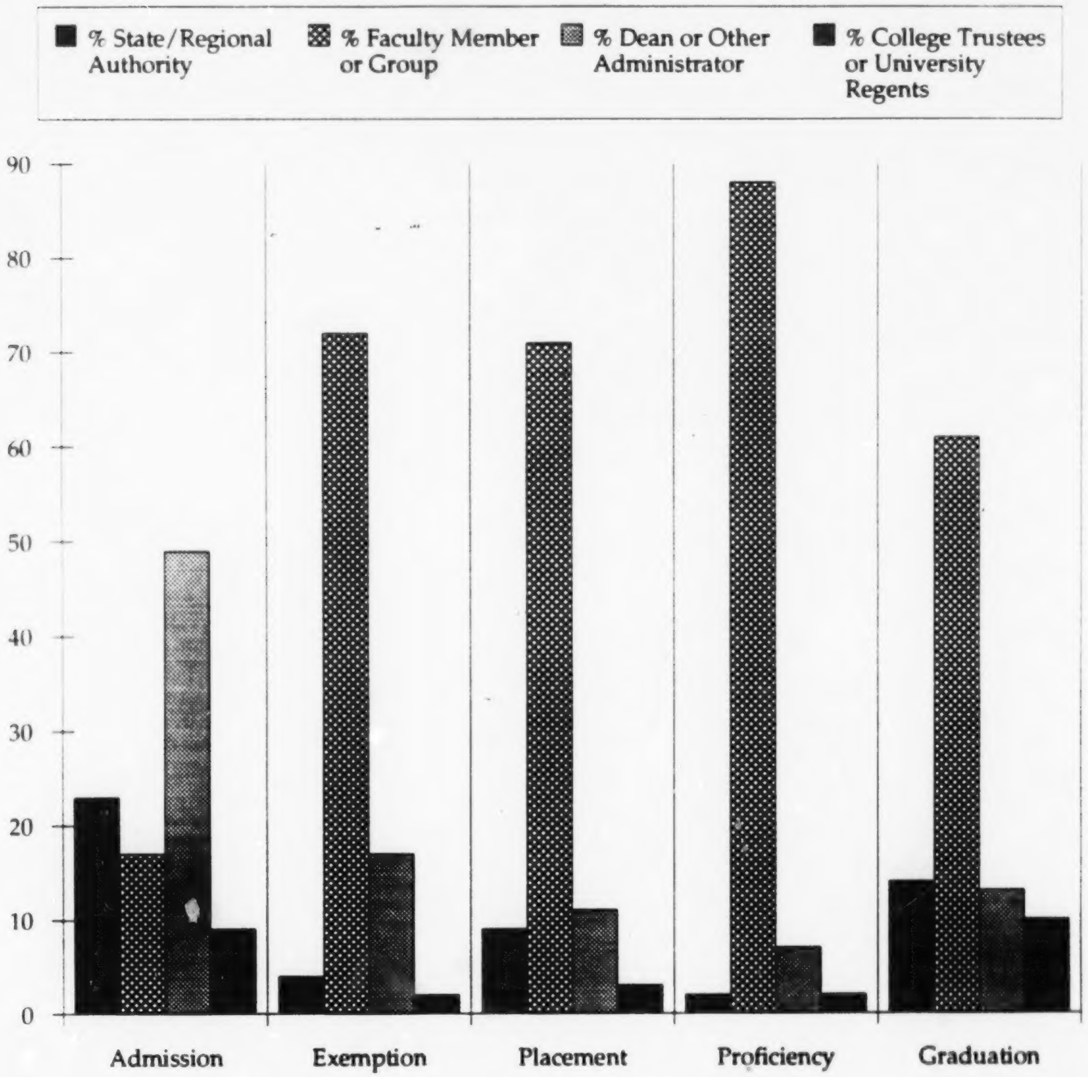
Participants in Setting the Standards for Timed Writing Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution



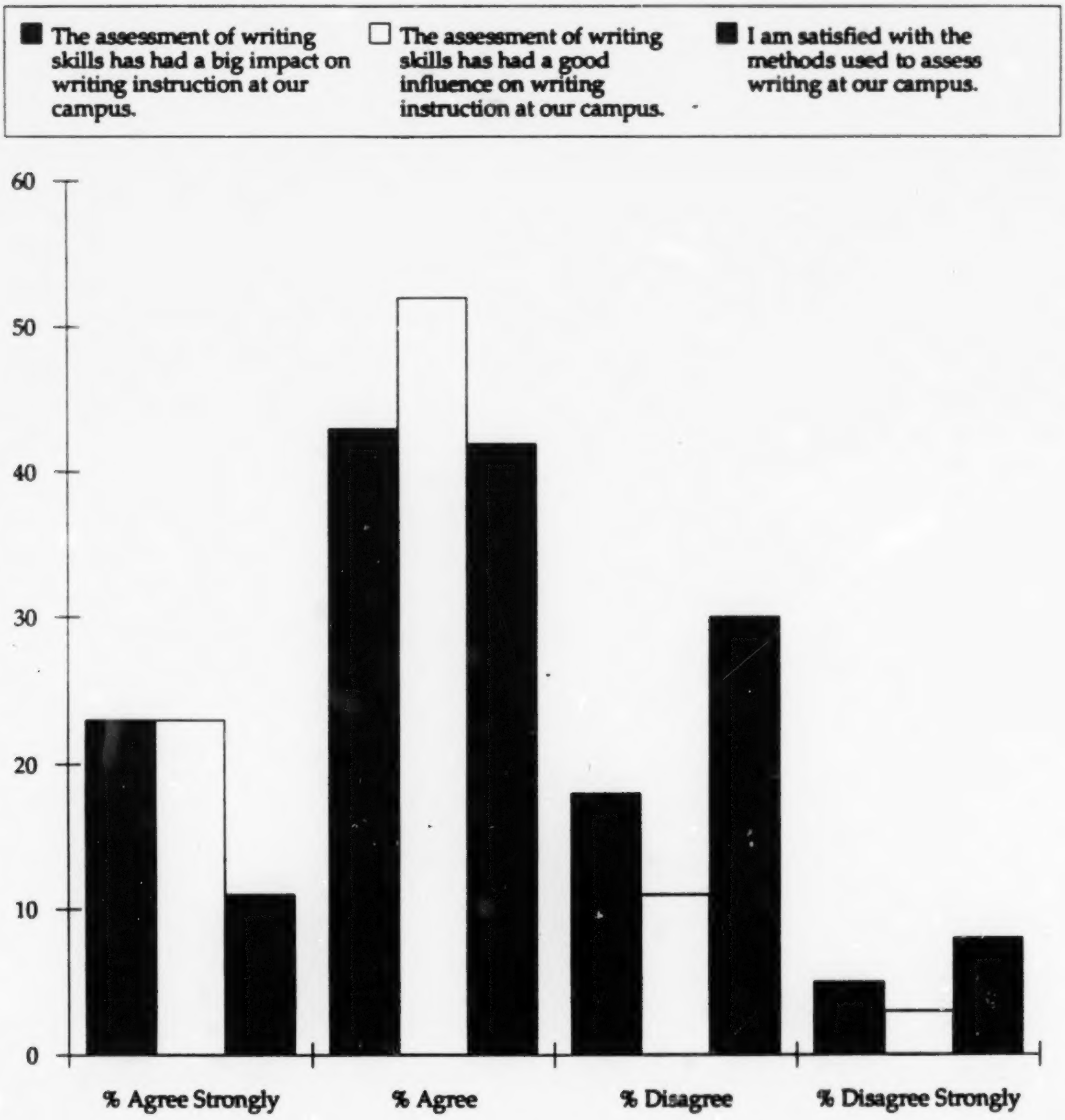
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples (Who Scores Timed Writing Samples?)





Governing Authority Over the Assessment Process (By Whom Mandated?)

Respondent Opinions About the Assessment of Writing Skills (N-534)



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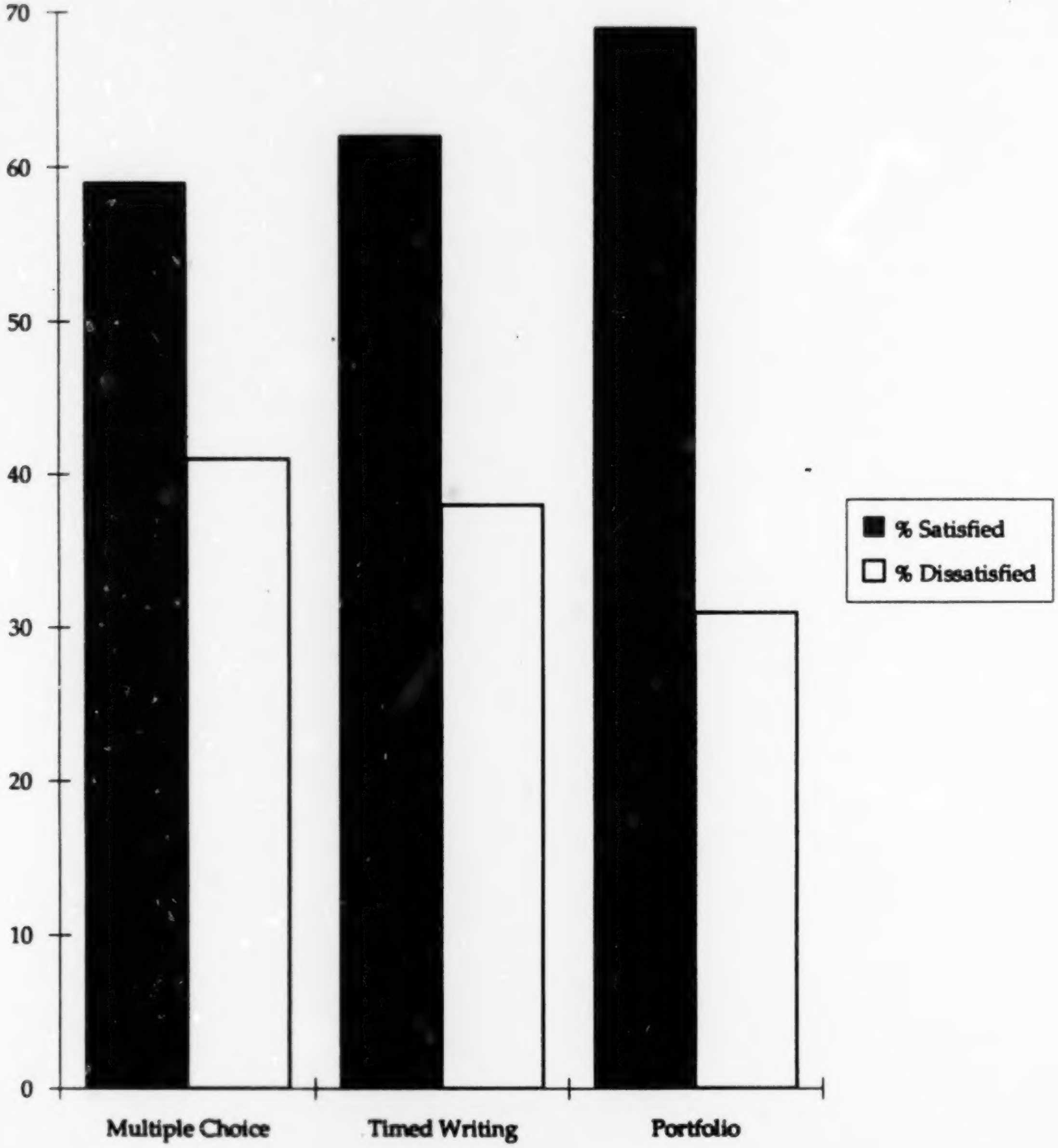
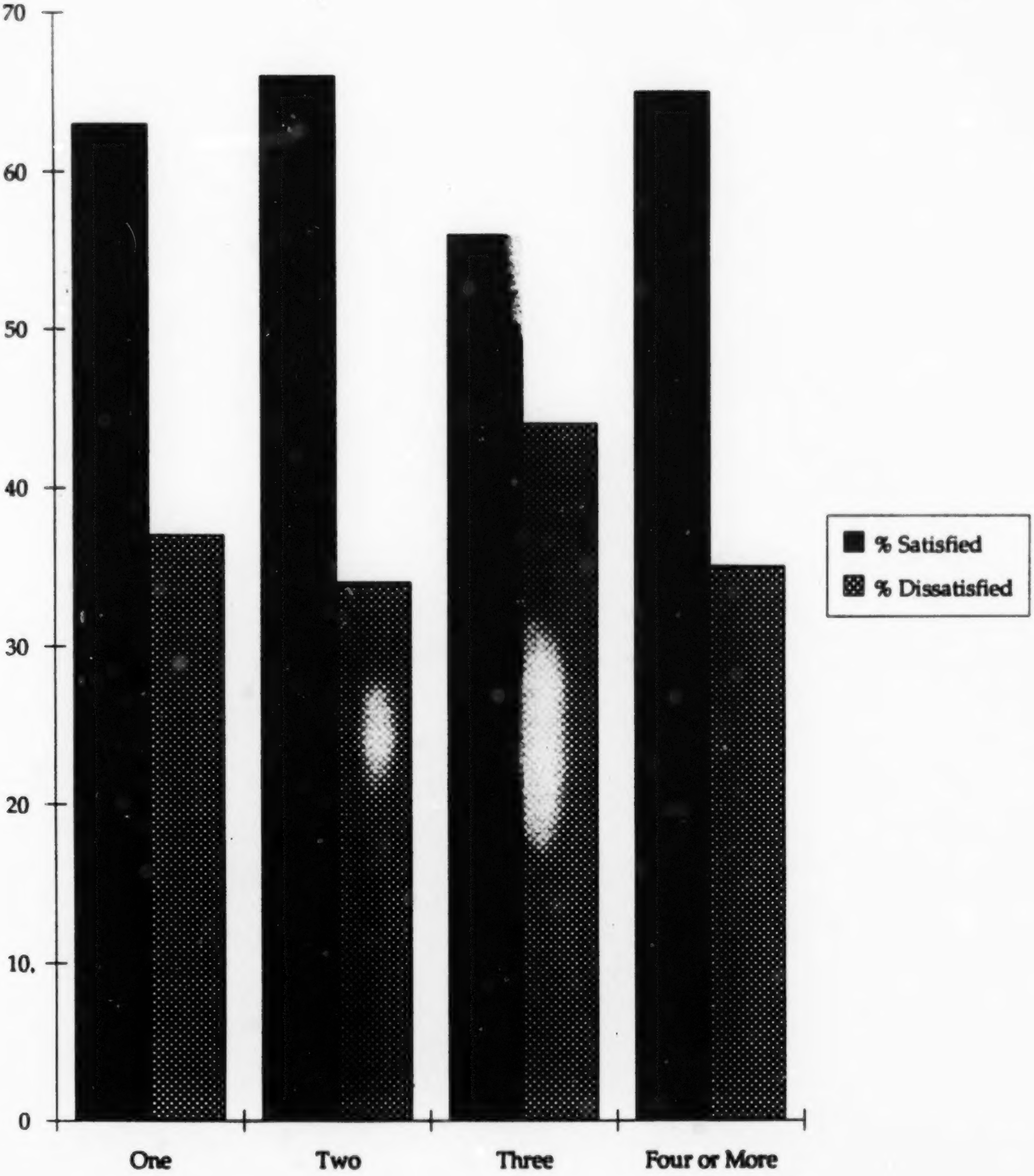
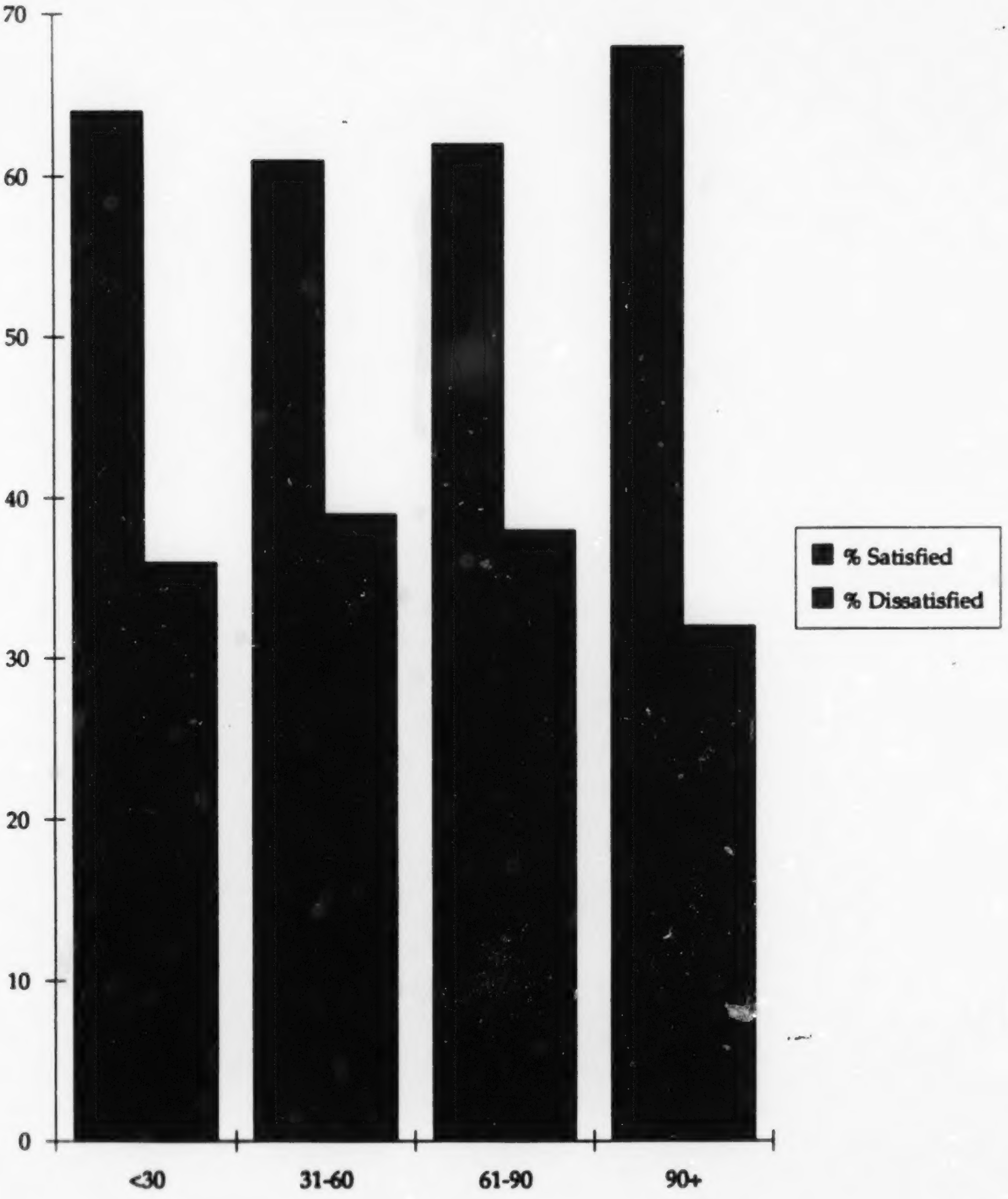


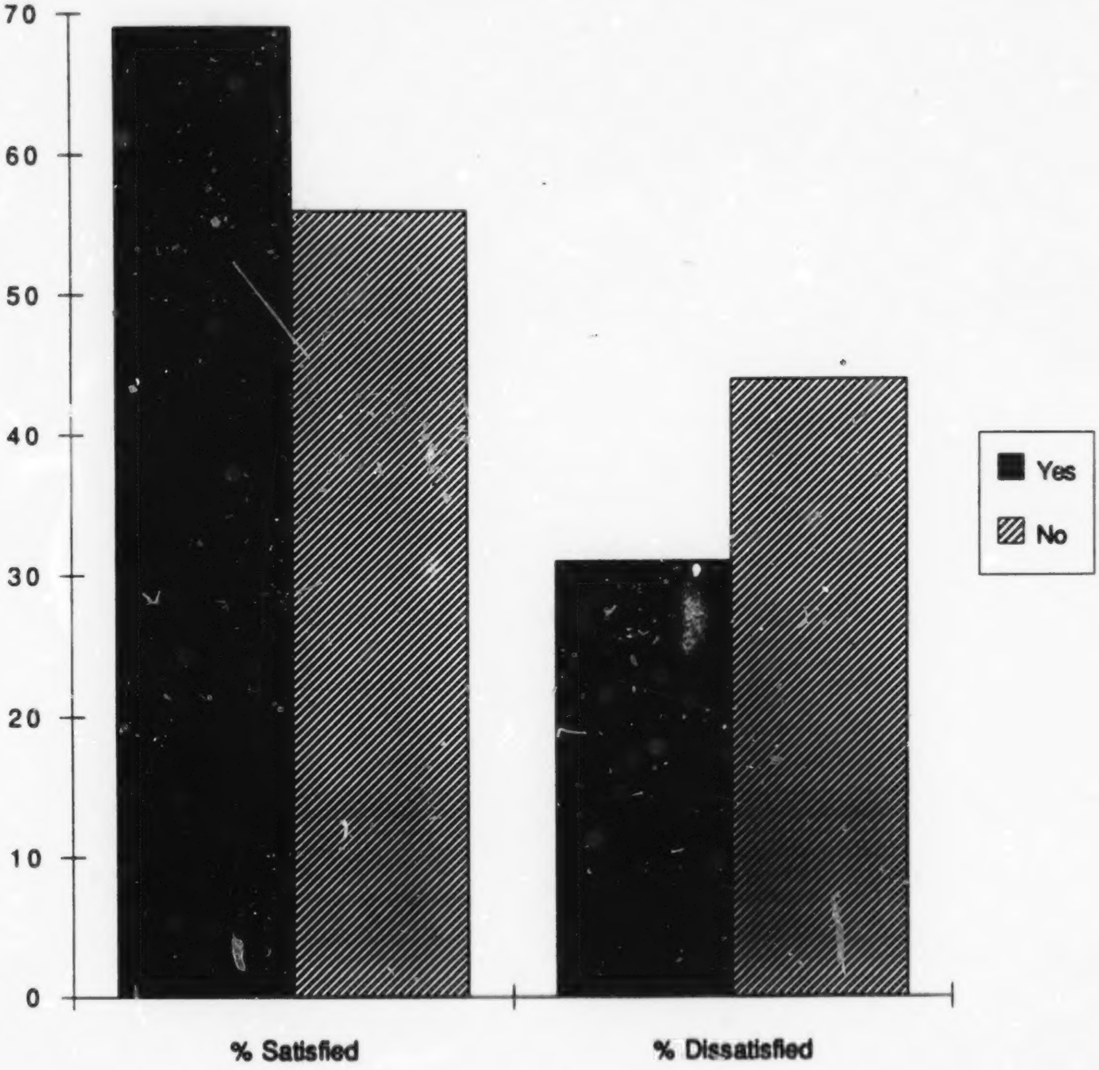
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction with Assessments Using Multiple Choice, Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making

Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Numbers of Writing Samples Collected in Writing Assessments



Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample





Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples

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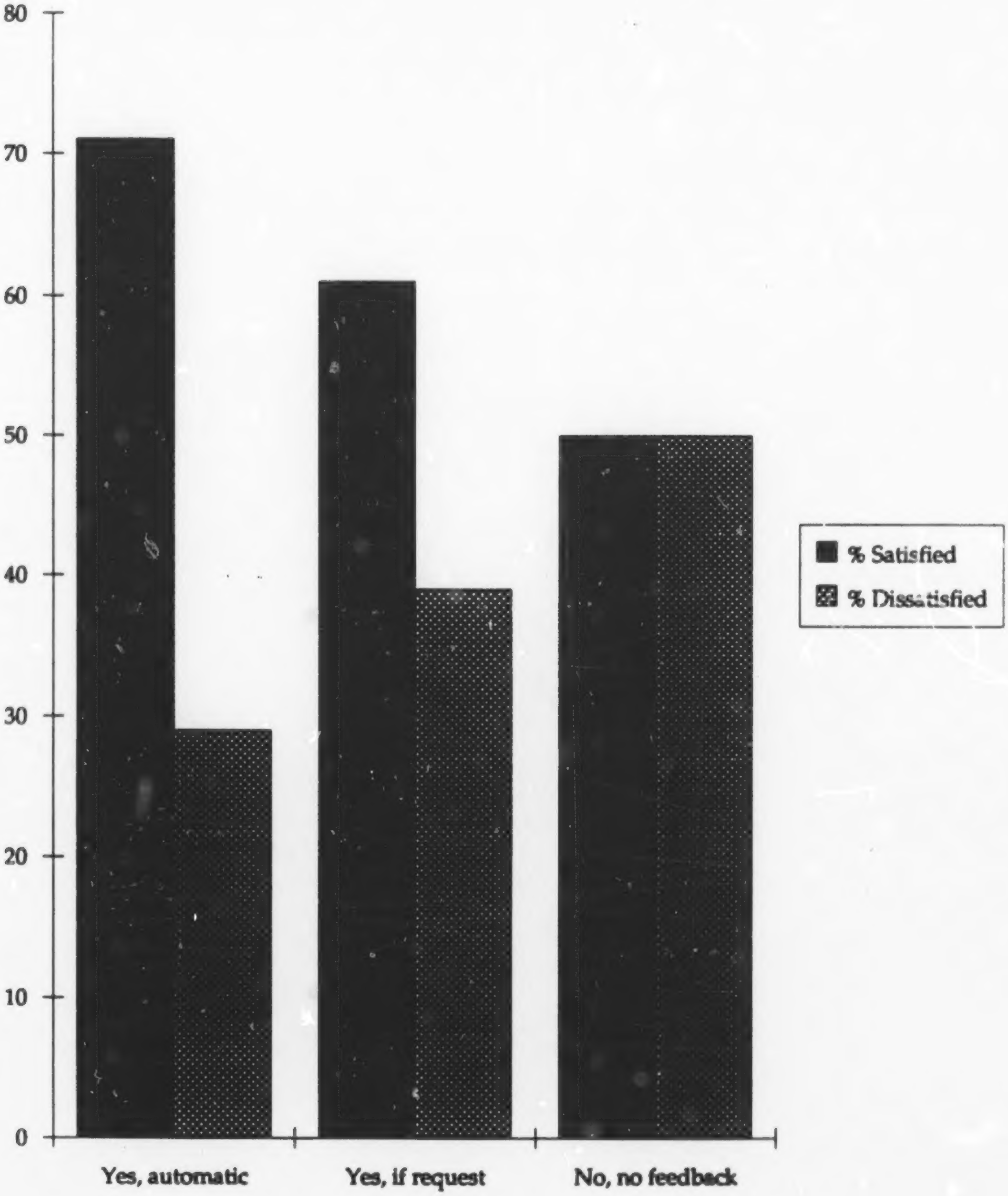
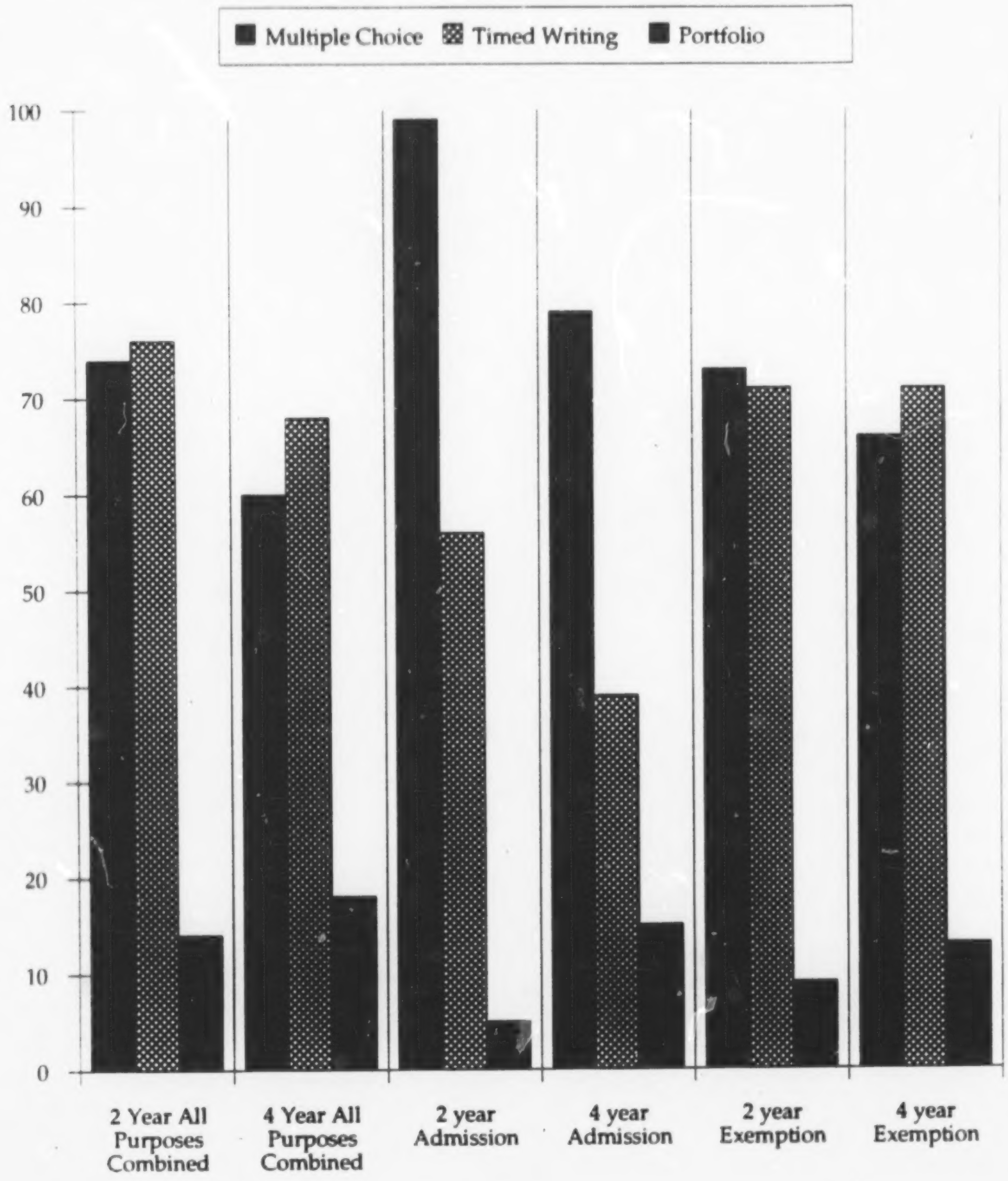
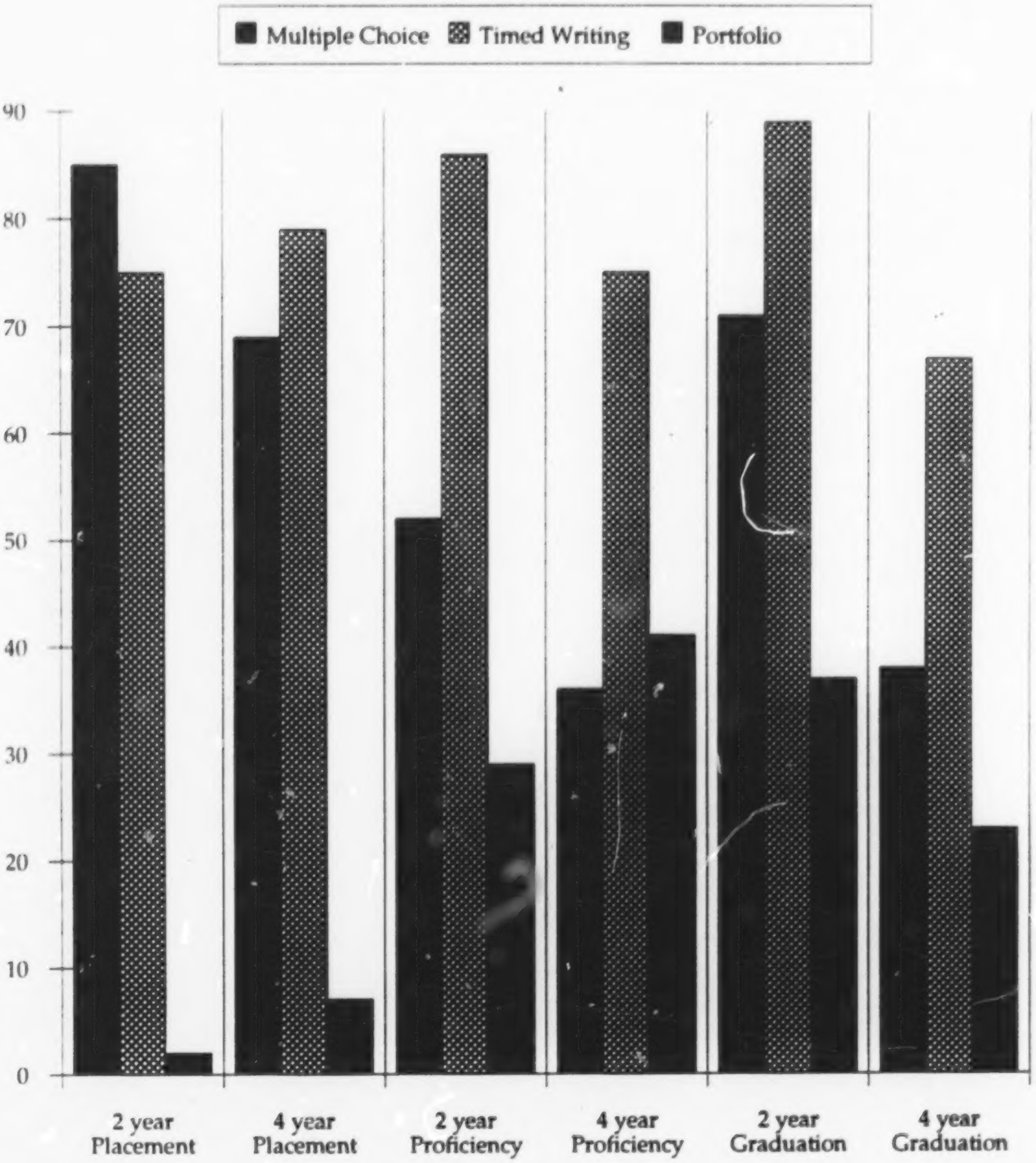
Numbers of Respondent Repports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Sample(s)



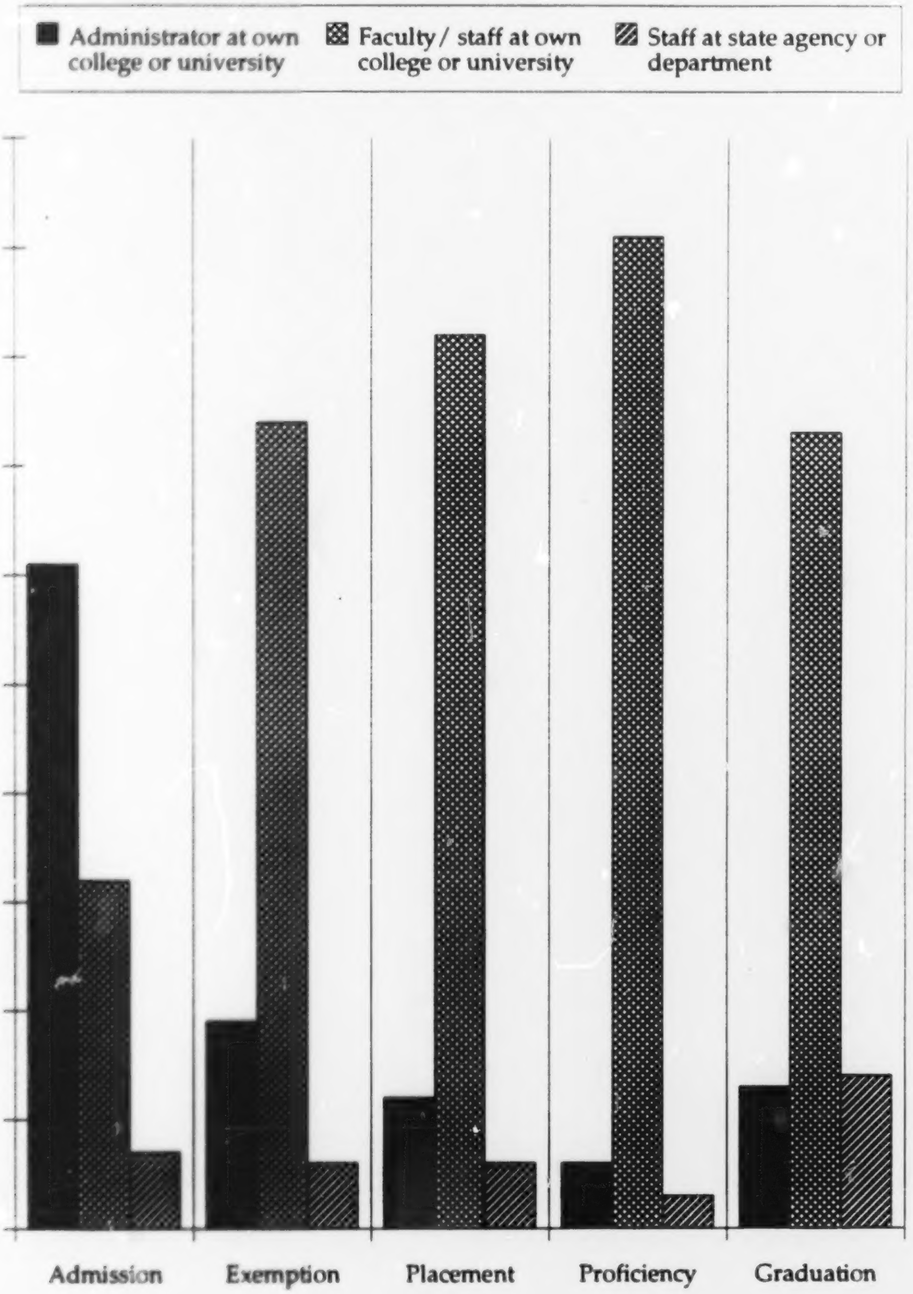


Approximate Numbers of Assessments Using Multiple Choice Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Approximate Numbers of Assessments Using Multiple Choice Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making Reported by 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions



Participants in the Assessment Process (Who Sets the Standards for Multiple Choice)



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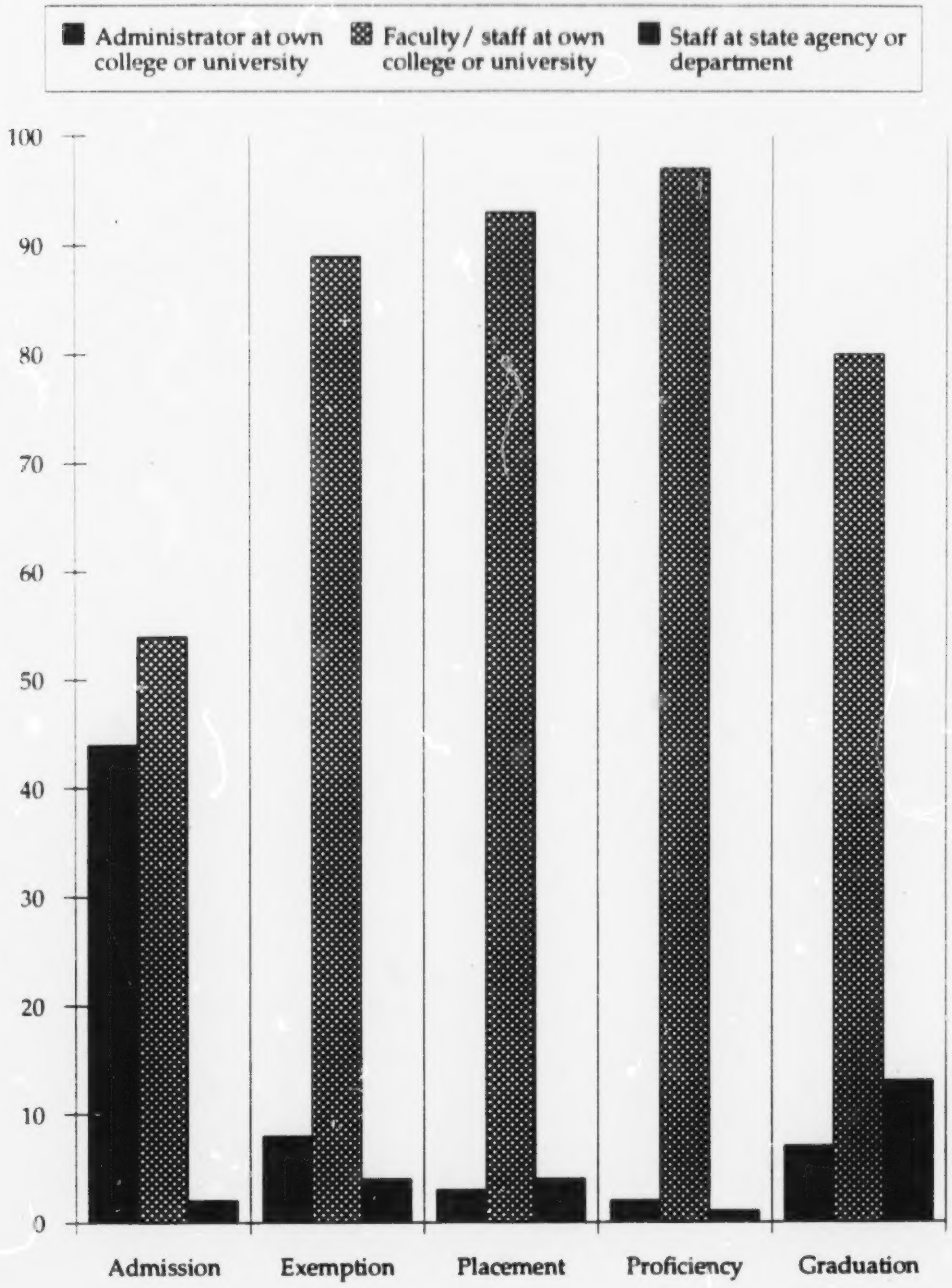
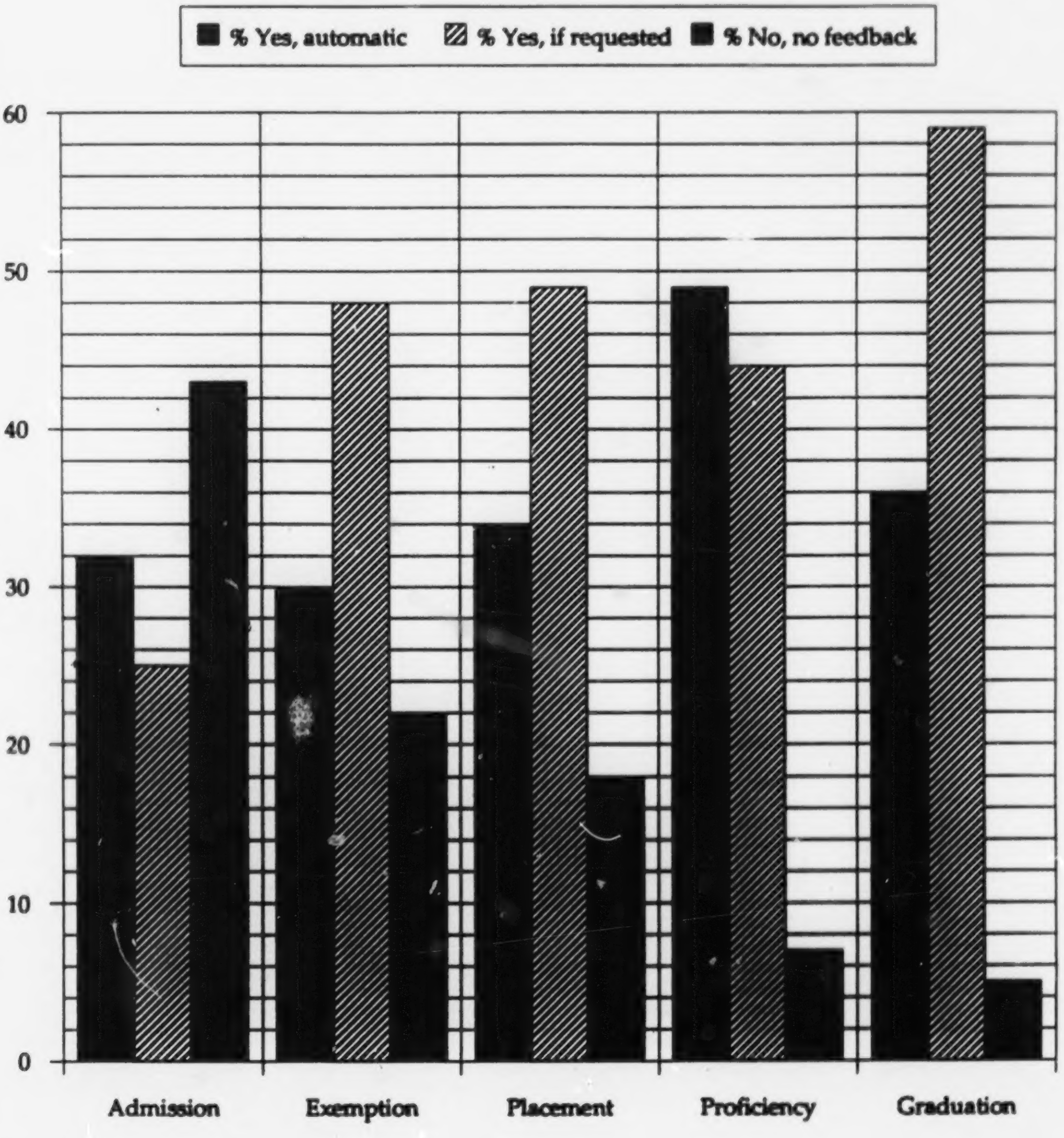
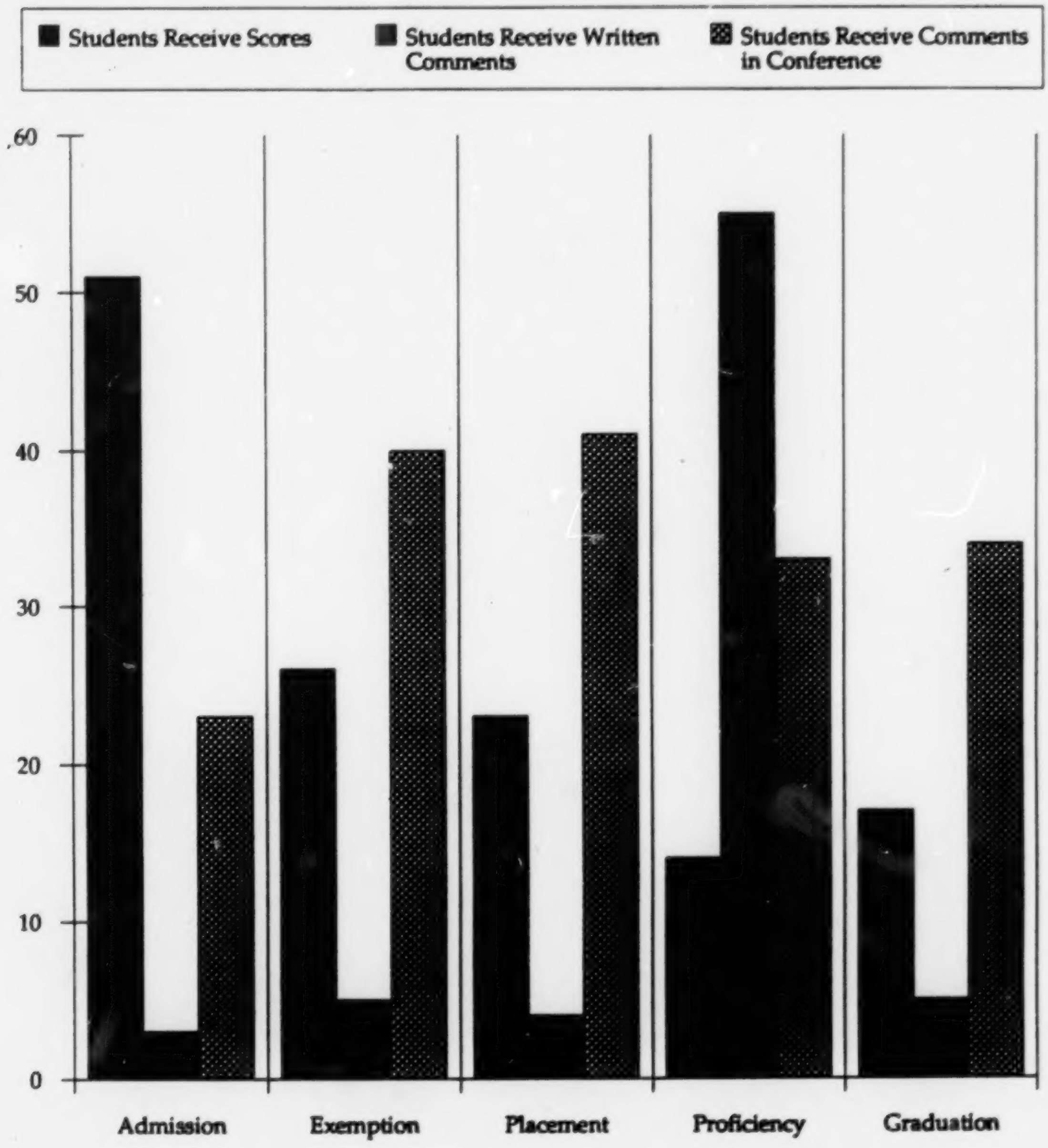
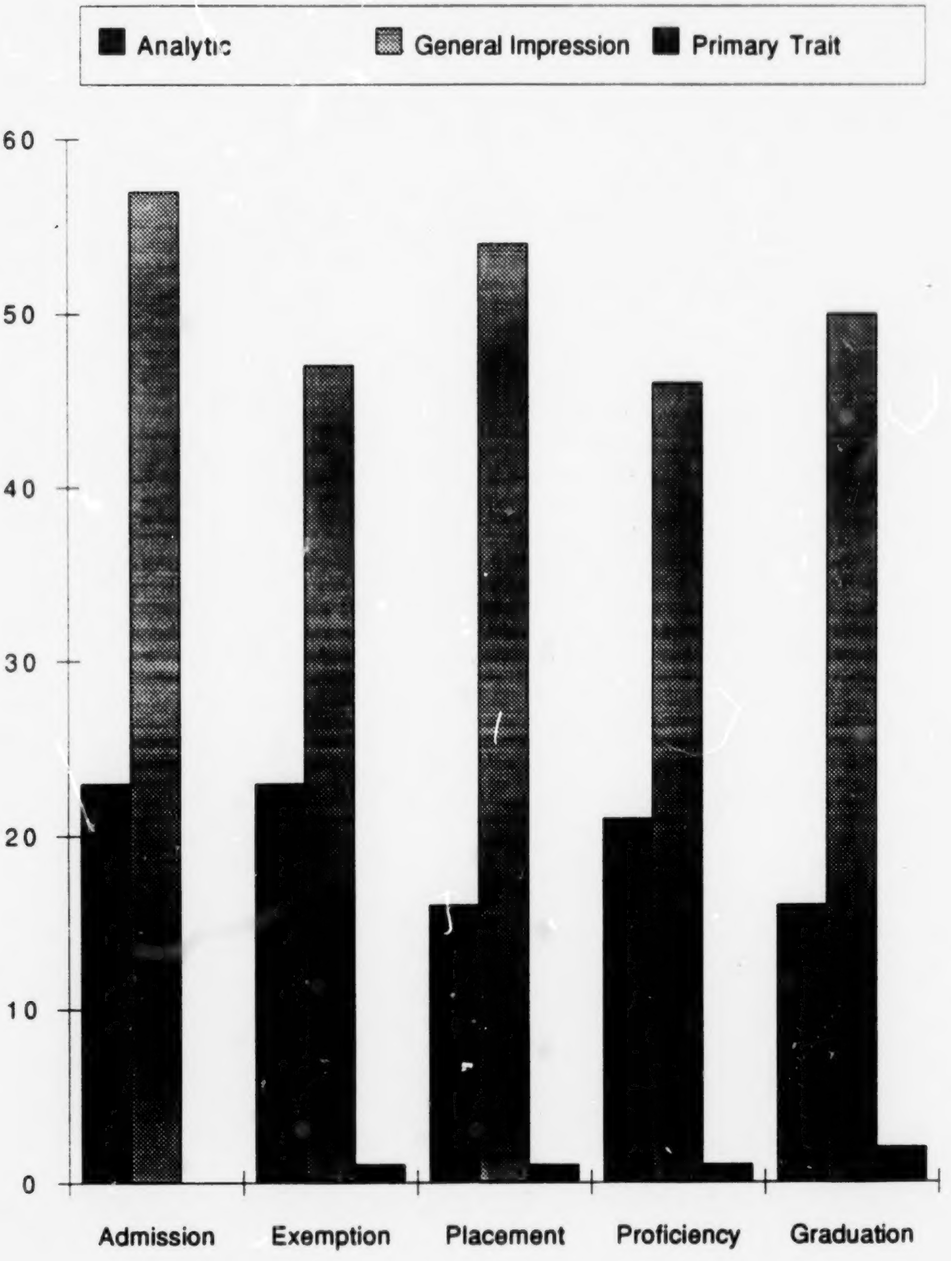


Feedback to Students About Performance on Timed Writing Samples
(Opportunity for Students to Receive Feedback)



Kinds of Feedback Provided To Students About Timed Writing Samples





Scoring Methods for Timed Writing Samples (Numbers of Institutions Using Single Scoring Methods)

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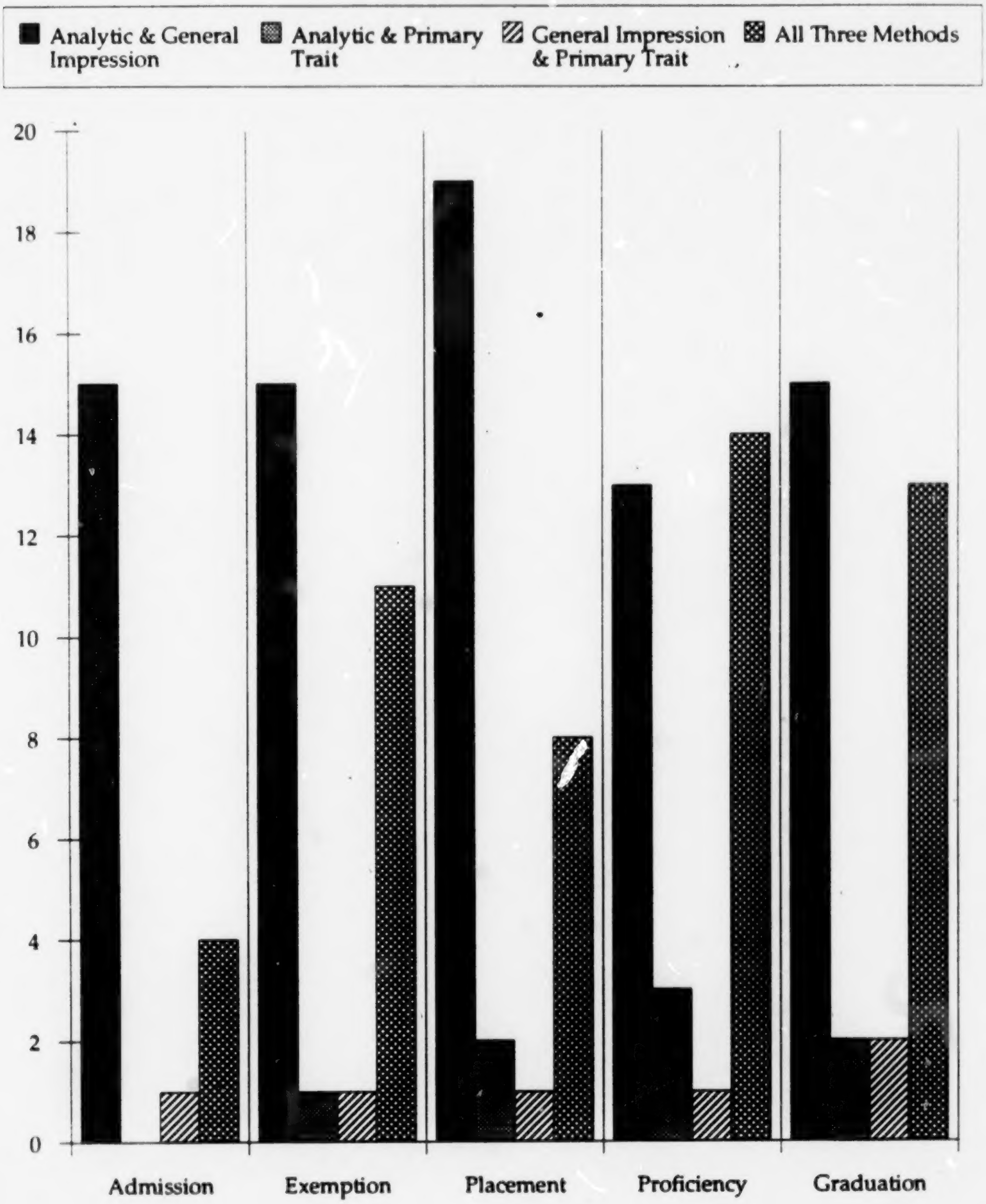
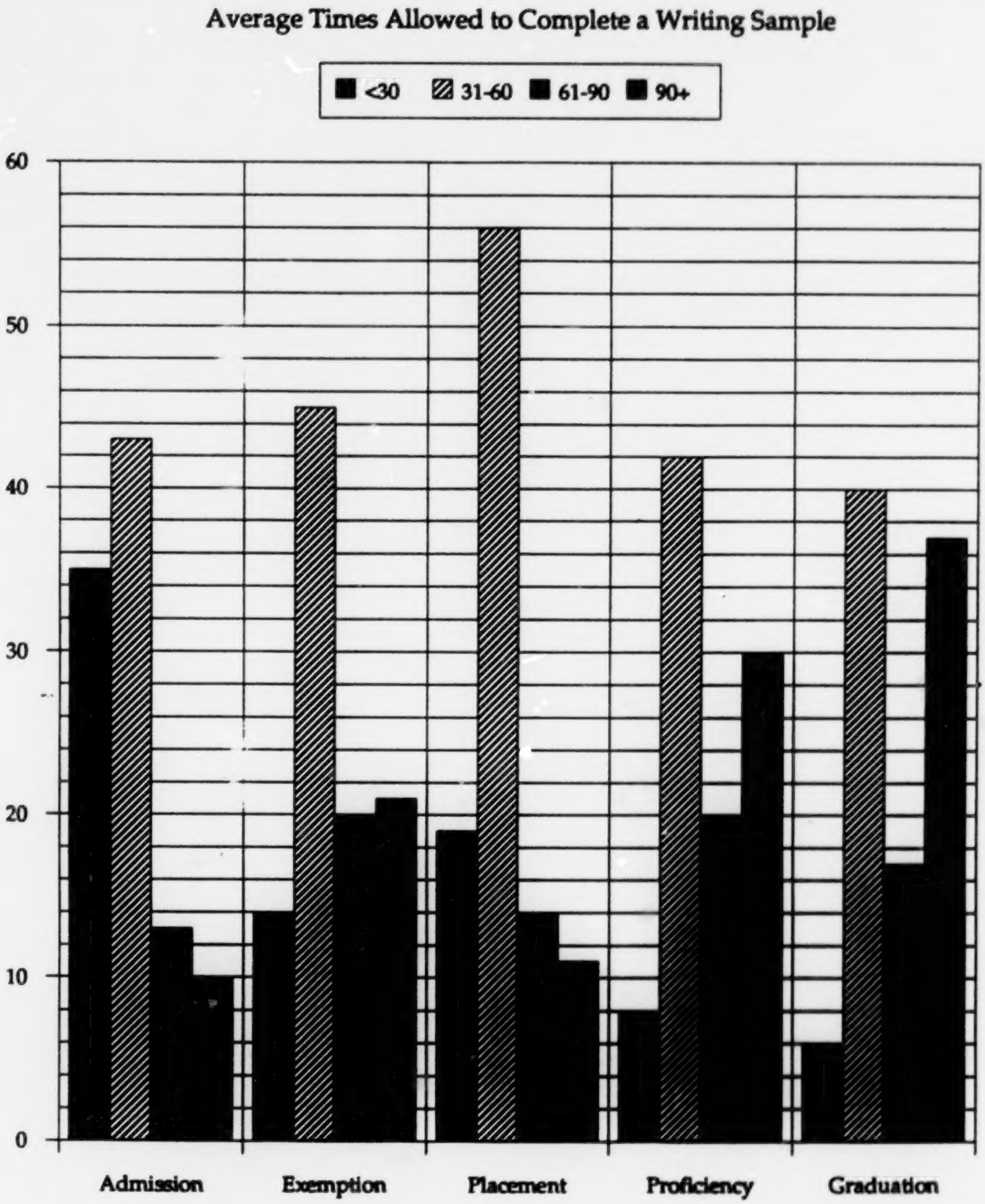
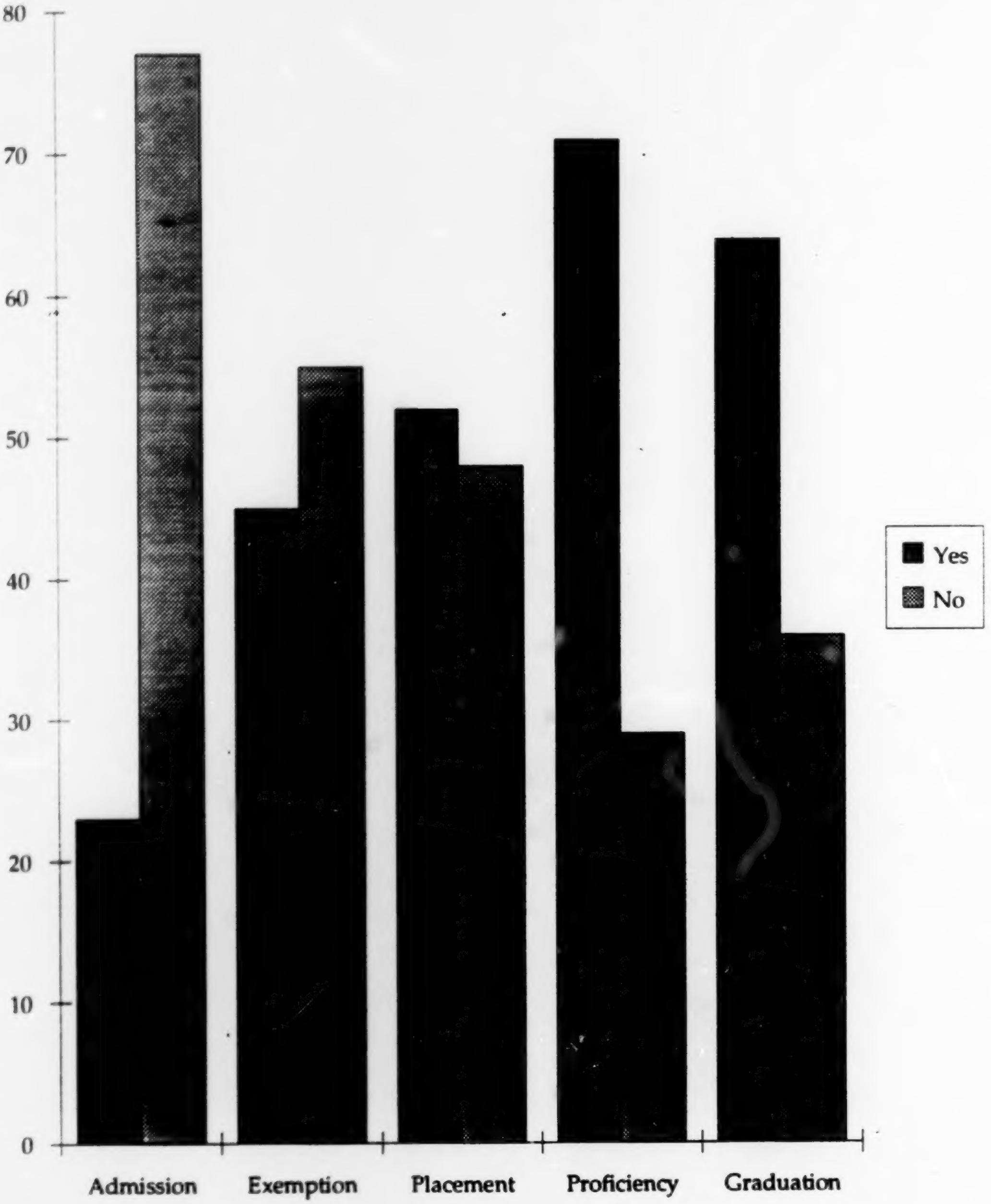


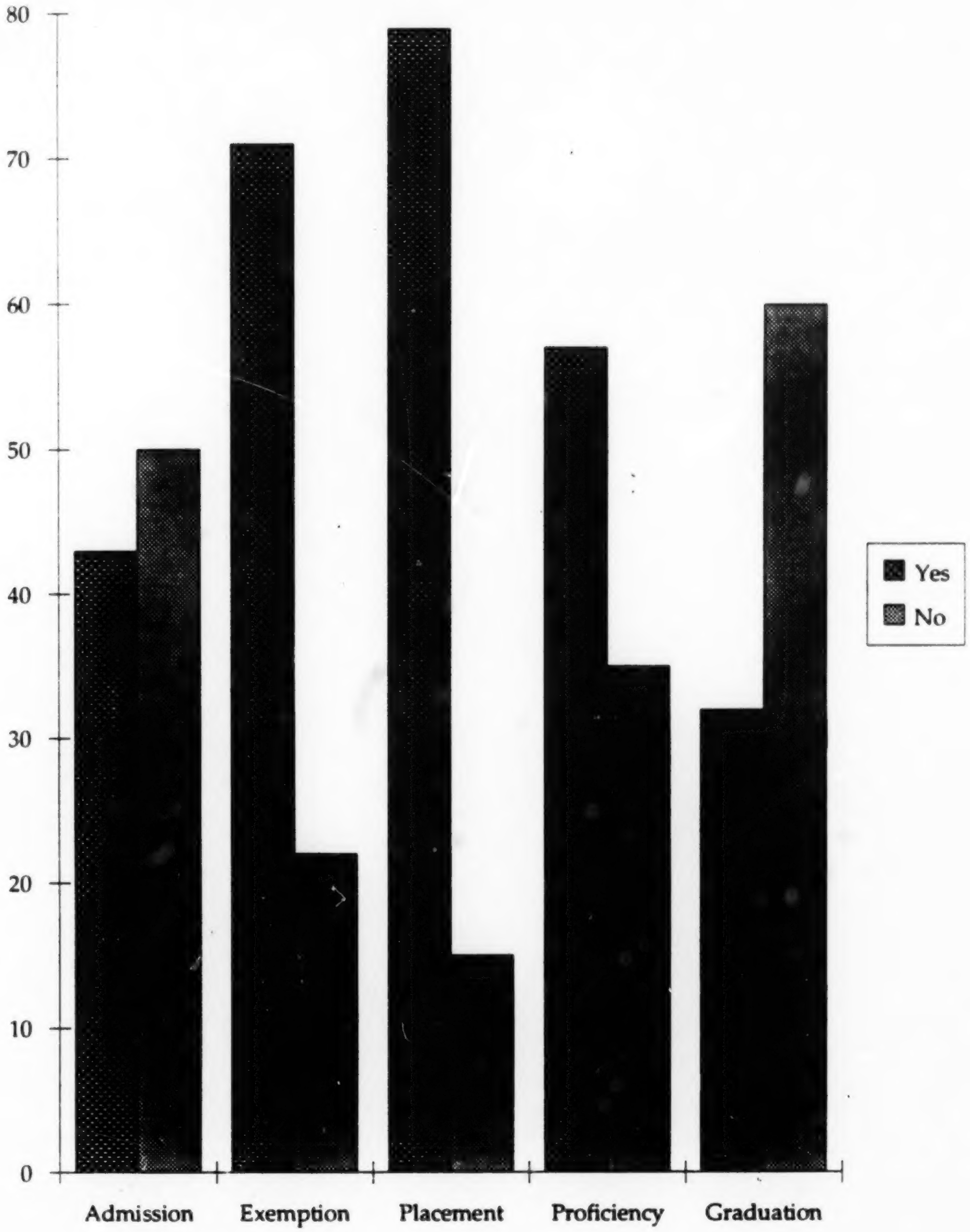
Scoring Methods for Timed Writing Samples (Numbers of Institutions Using Combinations of Scoring Methods)


Average Times Allowed to Complete a Writing Sample
■ <30
▨ 31-60
■ 61-90
■ 90+
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Admission
Exemption
Placement
Proficiency
Graduation

Prewriting and/or Revising Activities in the Collection of Timed Writing Samples



Decisions Based on Any Type of Assessment of Writing Skills (N=534)



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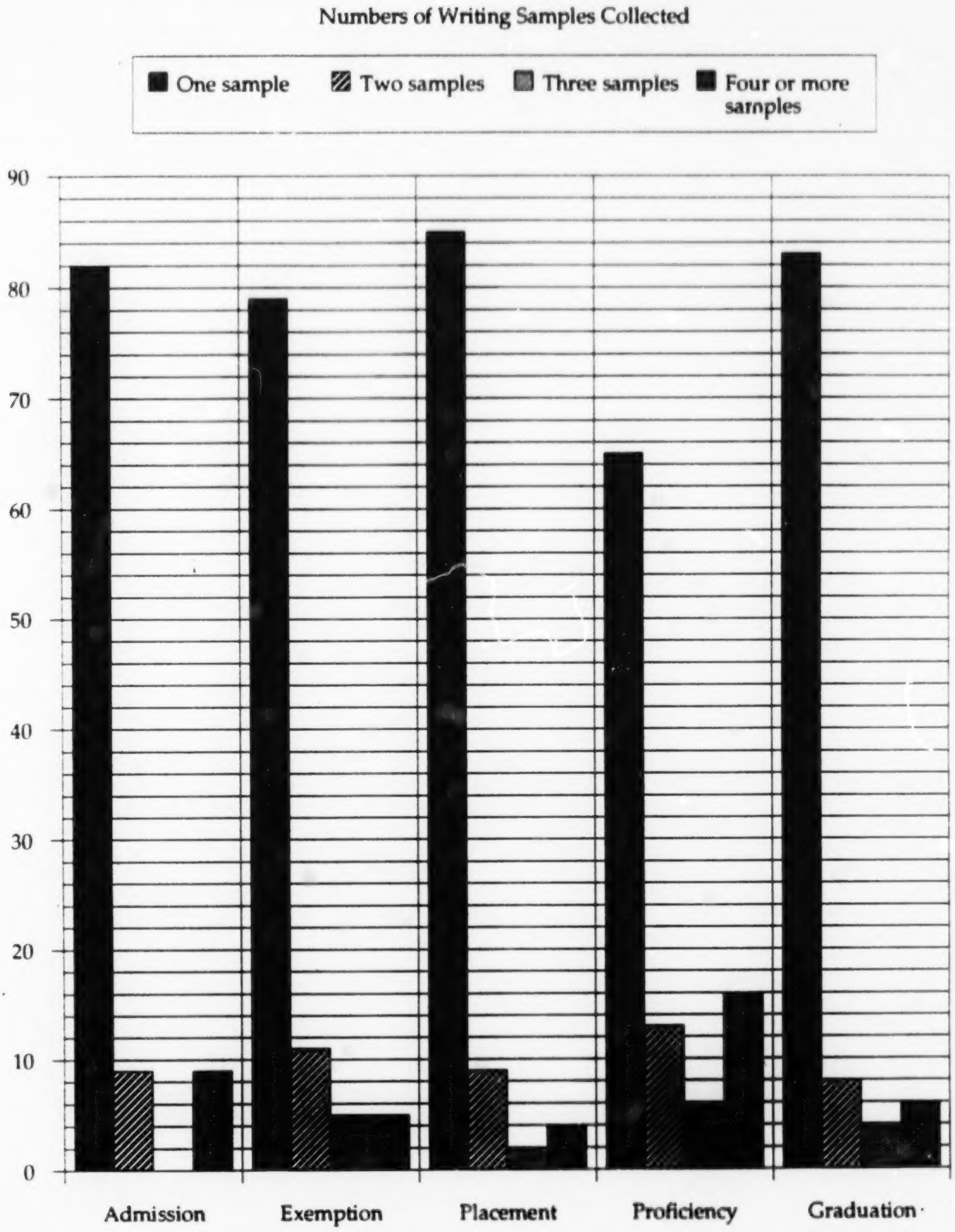
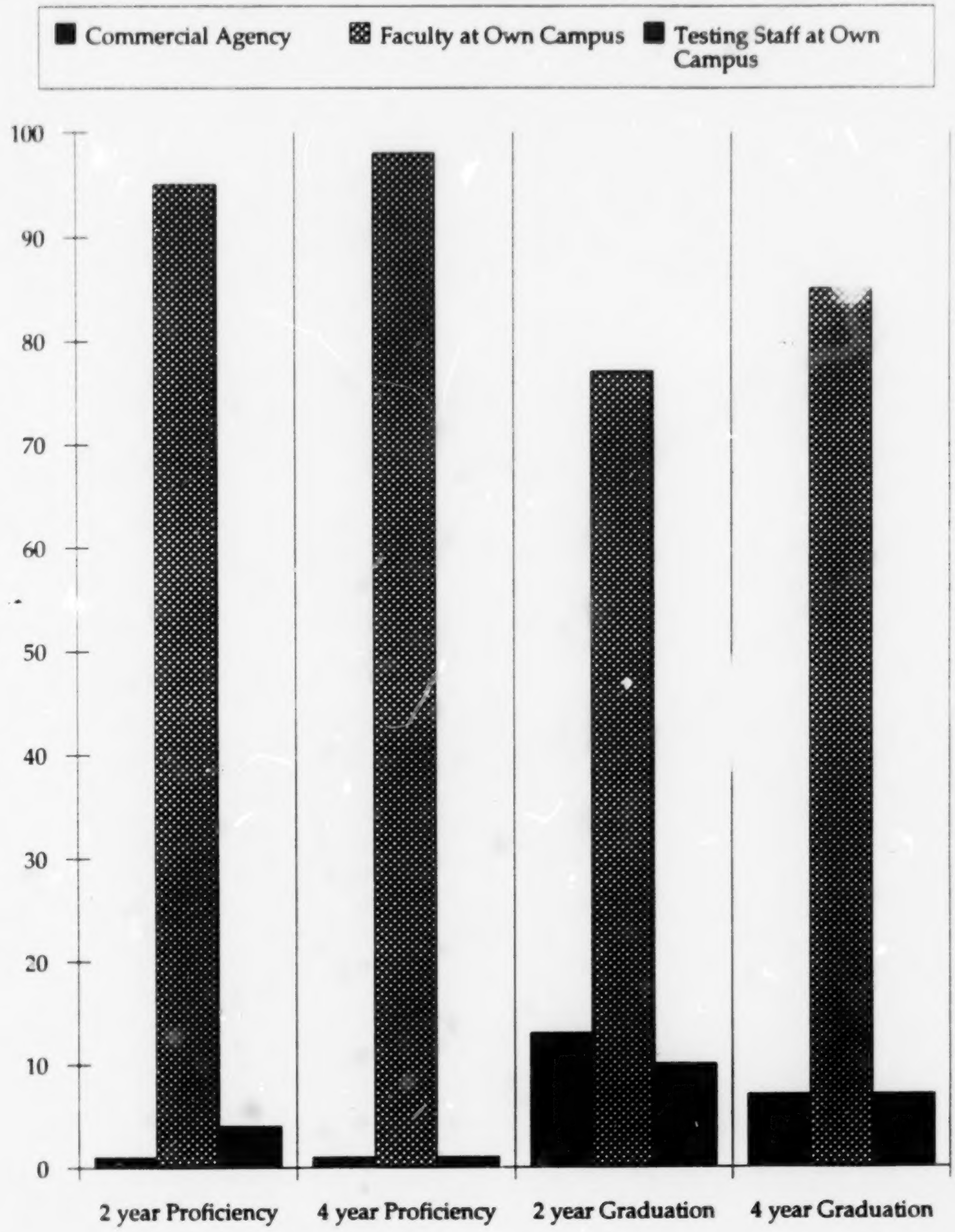
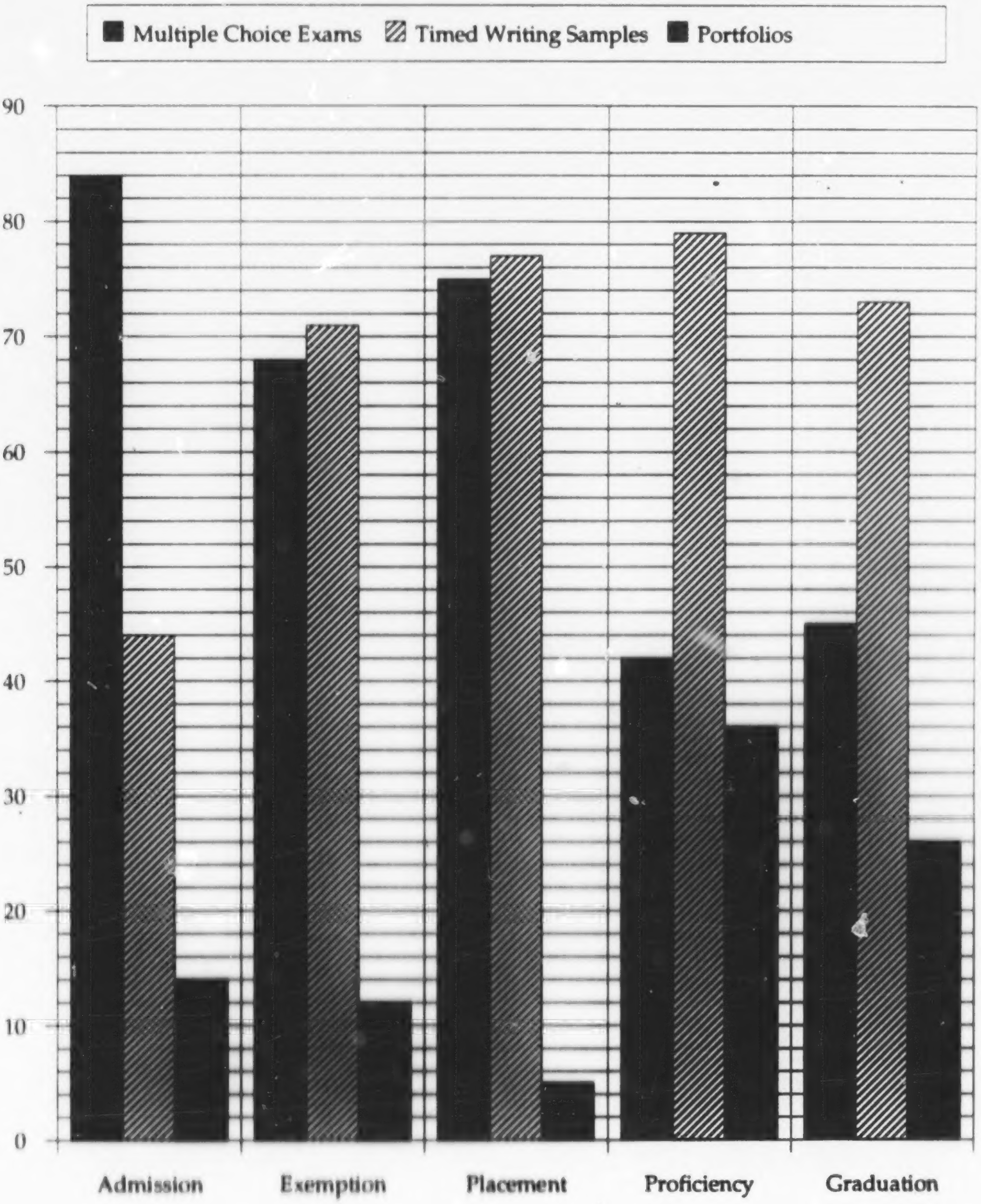


Numbers of Writing Samples Collected

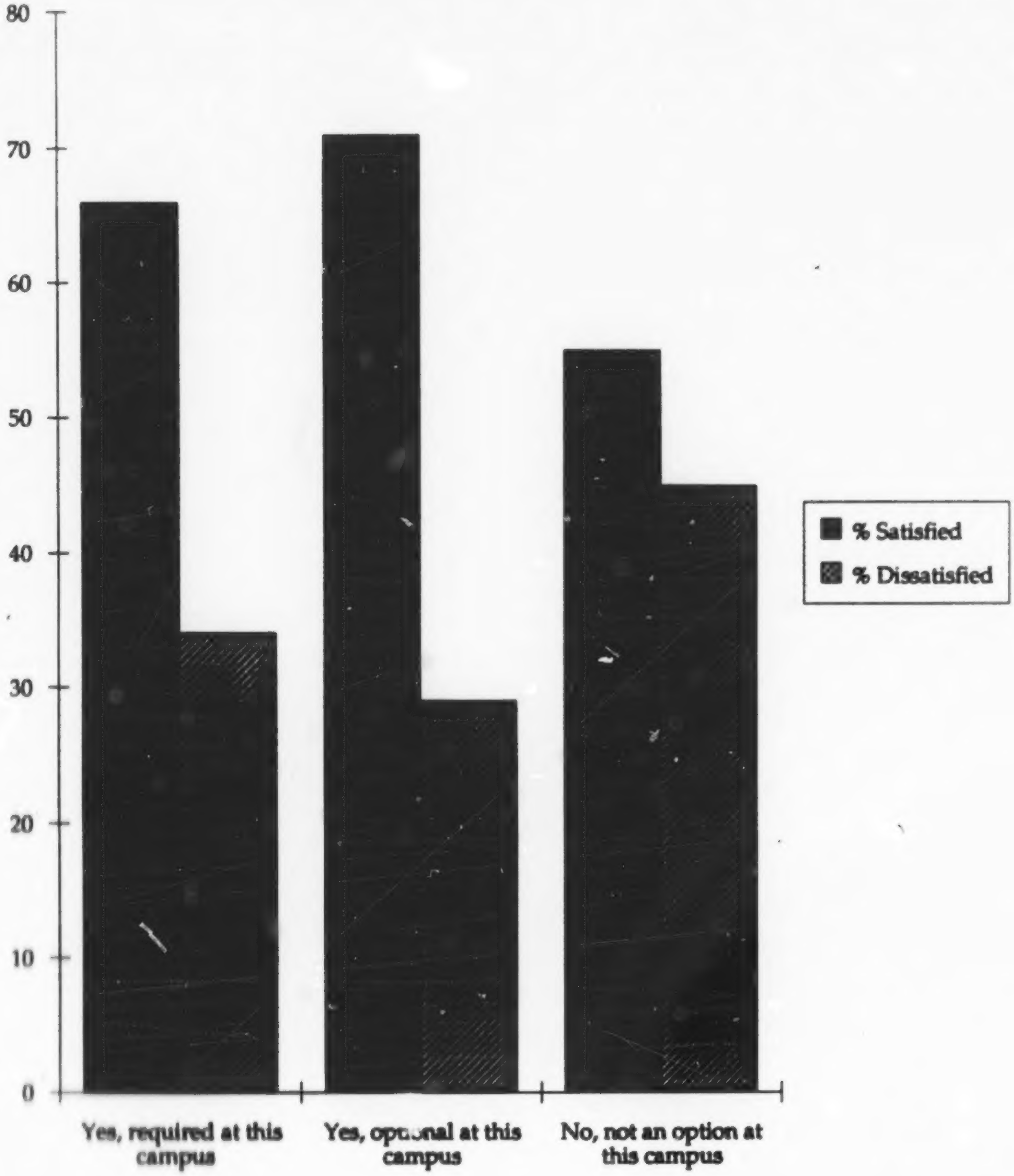
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution



Approximate Numbers of Institutions Using Multiple Choice, Timed Writing Samples and/or Portfolios for Decision Making



Numbers of Respondents Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail Assesment of Proficiency for Entry into a Next Level of Coursework



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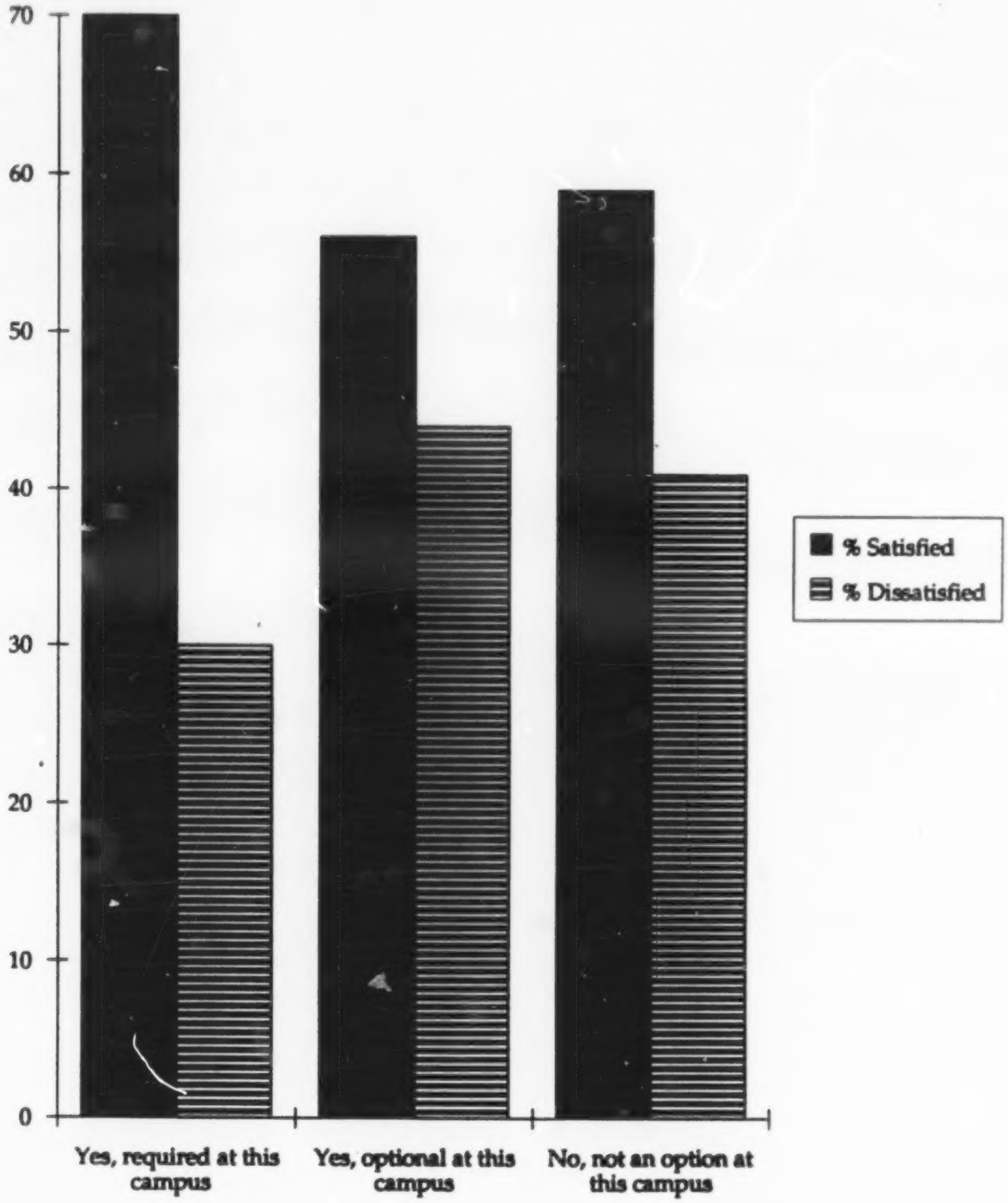
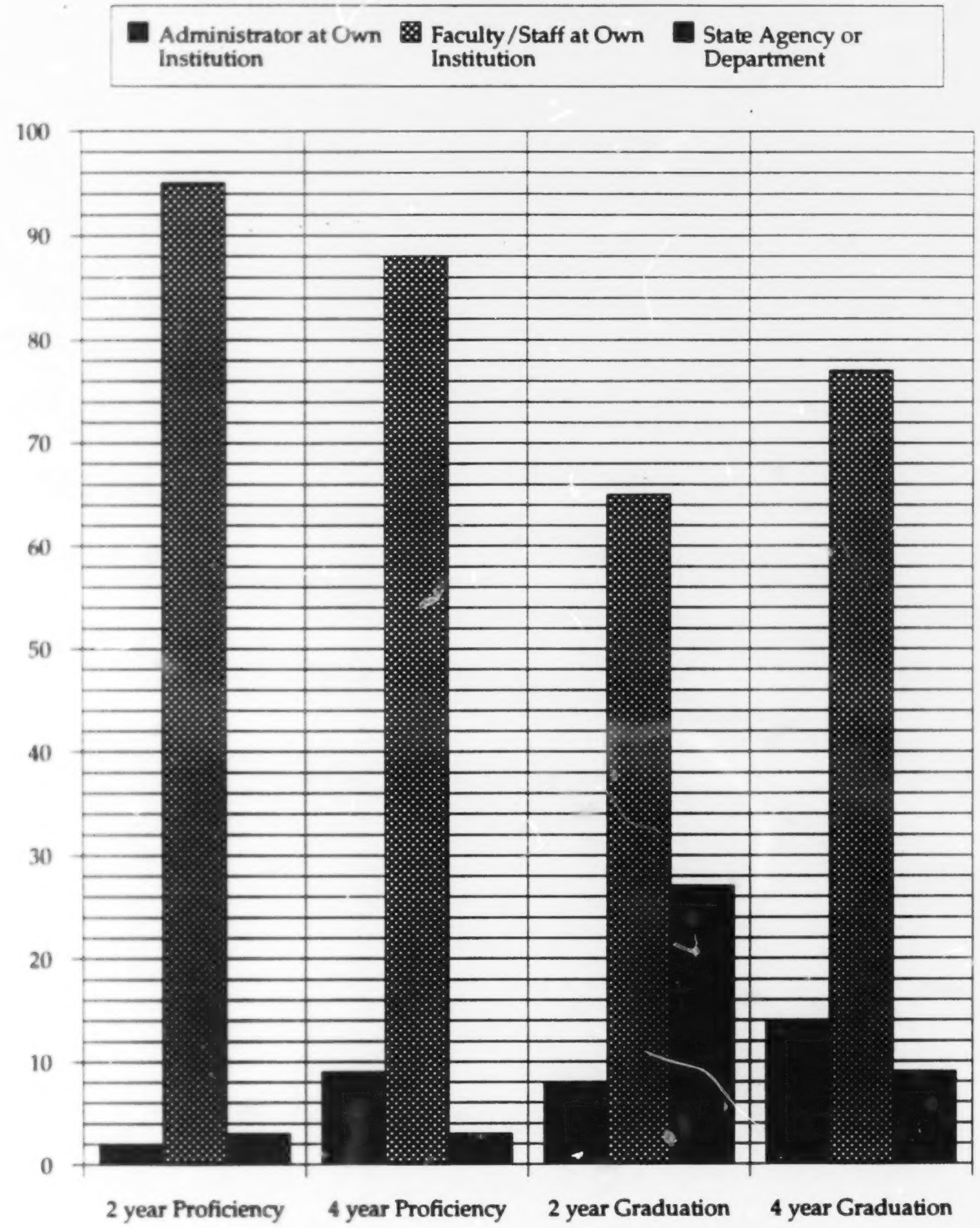
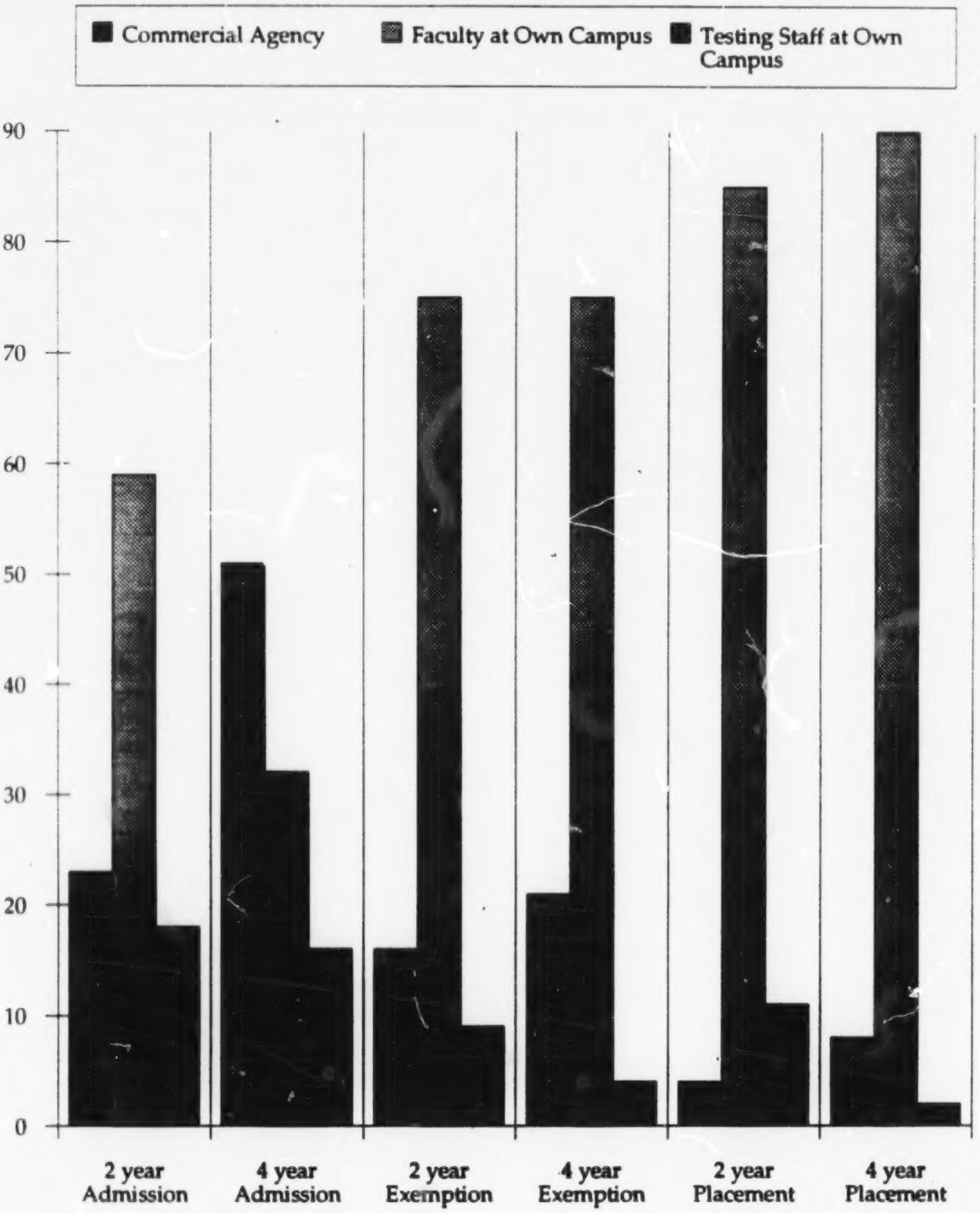
Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail Assessment as a Condition for Graduation



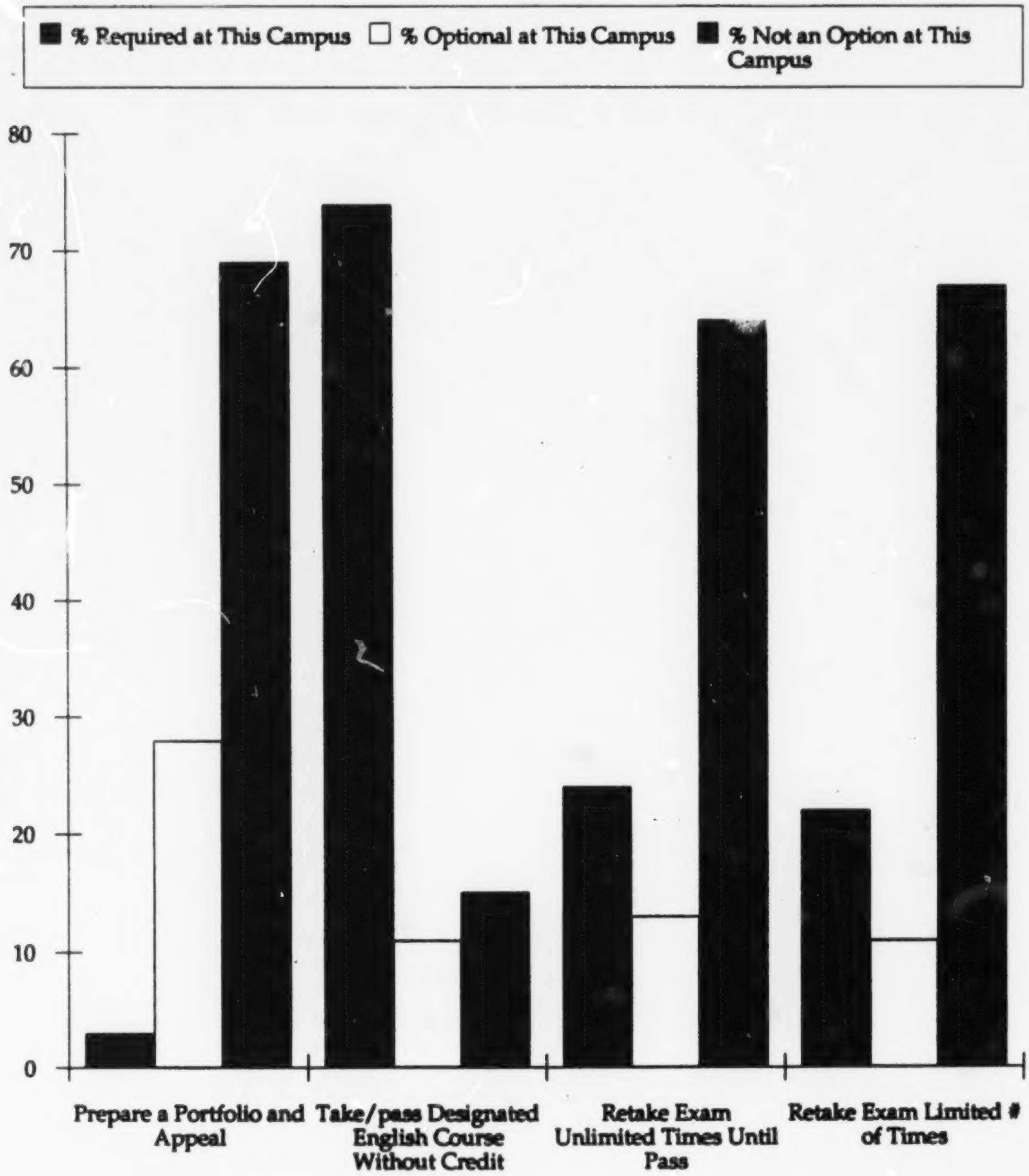
Participants in Setting the Standards for Multiple Choice Exams by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution



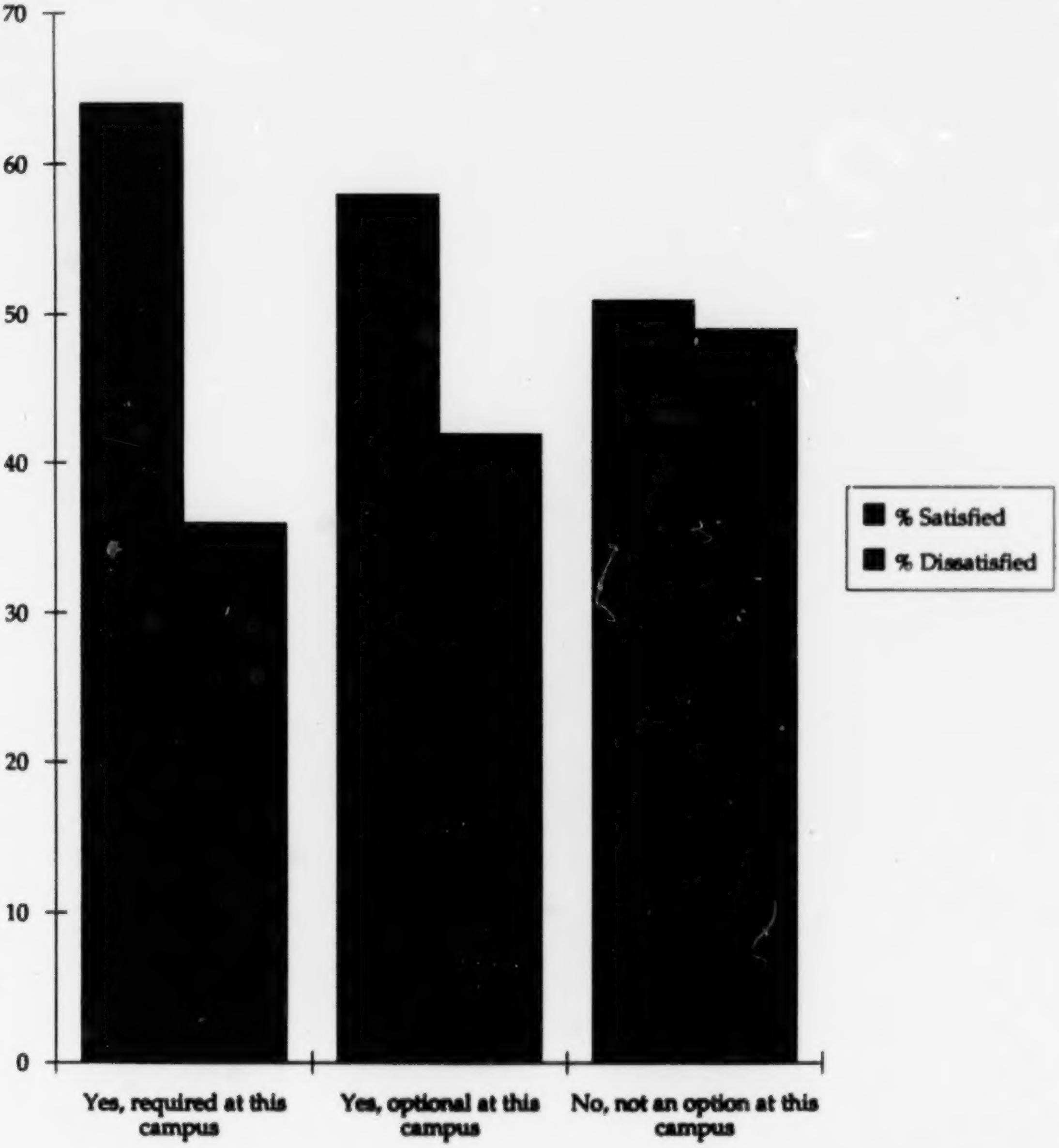
Scoring Practices for Timed Writing Samples by 2 Year/4 Year Status of Institution



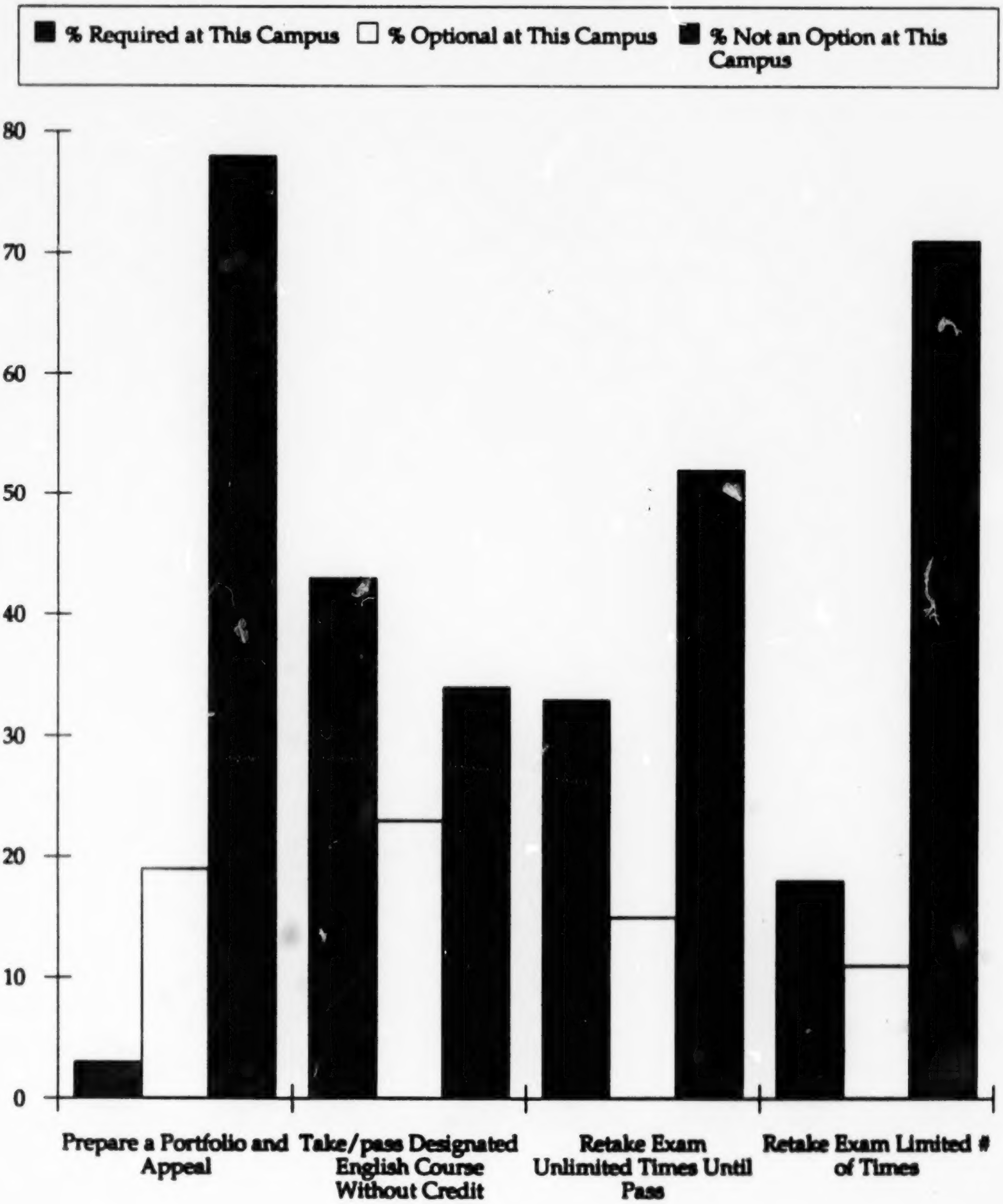
Consequences for Students (For Proficiency for Entry into a Next Level)



Numbers of Respondent Reports of Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Related to the Consequences for Students Who Fail to Qualify for the Regular Freshman English Course



Consequences for Students (For Graduation)



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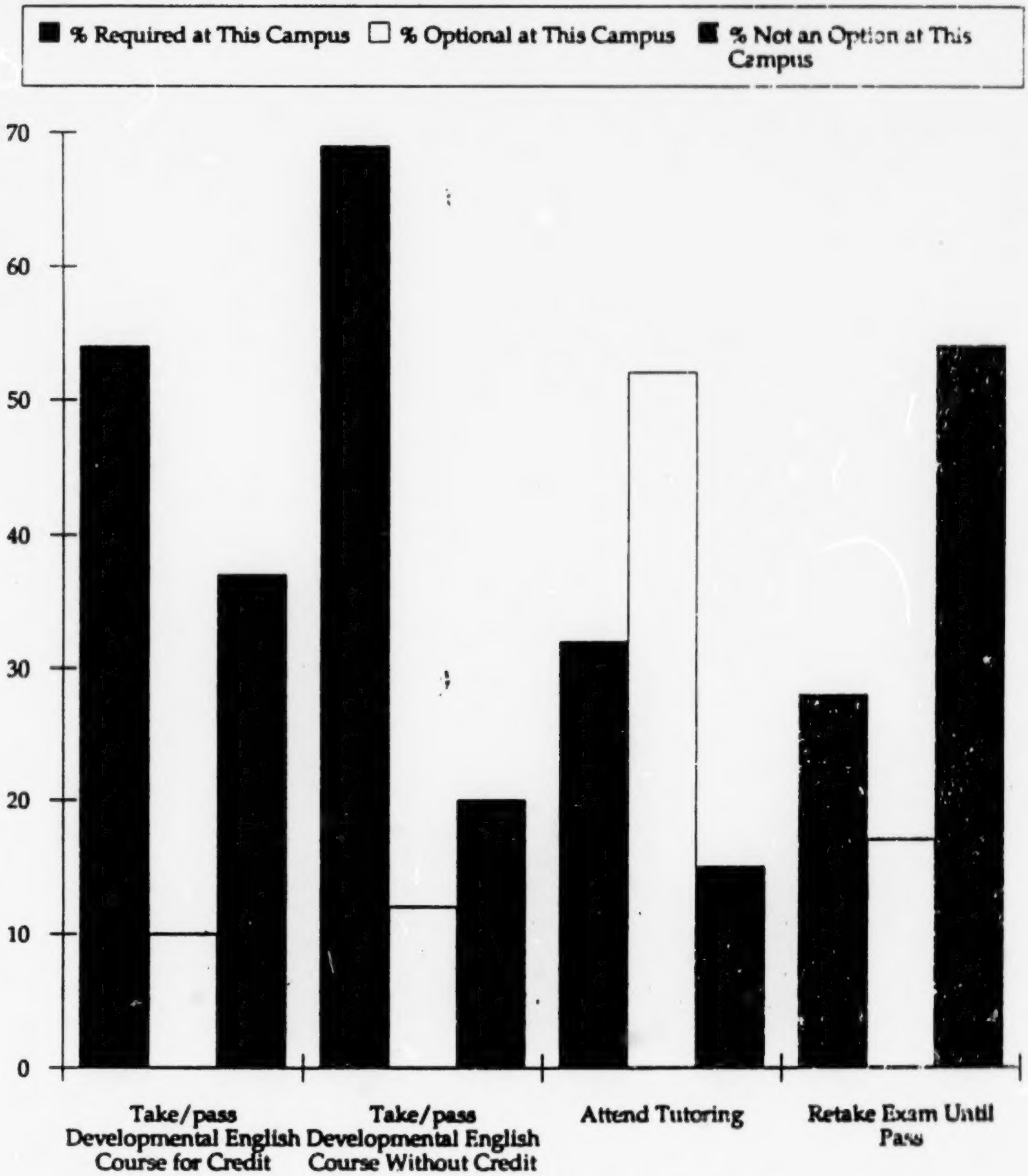
Consequences for Students (For Placement)


■ % Required at This Campus
☐ % Optional at This Campus
■ % Not an Option at This Campus
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Take/pass Developmental English Course for Credit
Take/pass Developmental English Course Without Credit
Attend Tutoring
Retake Exam Until Pass